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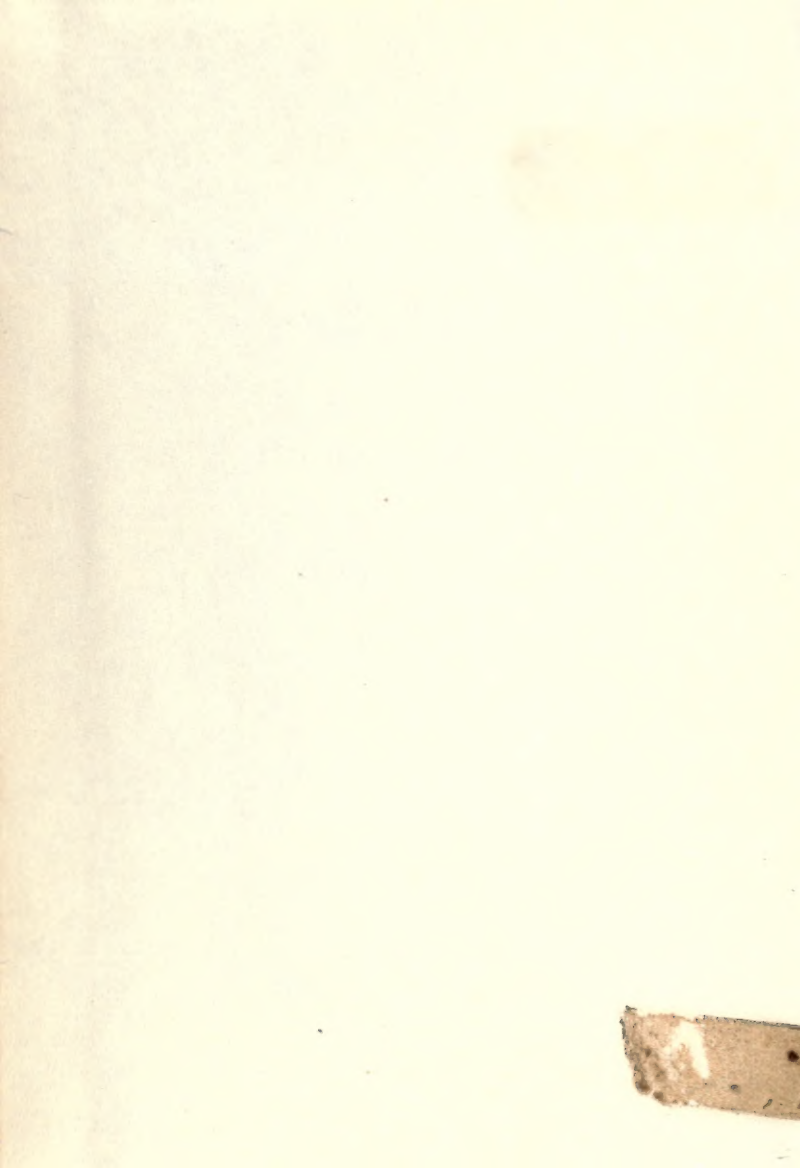






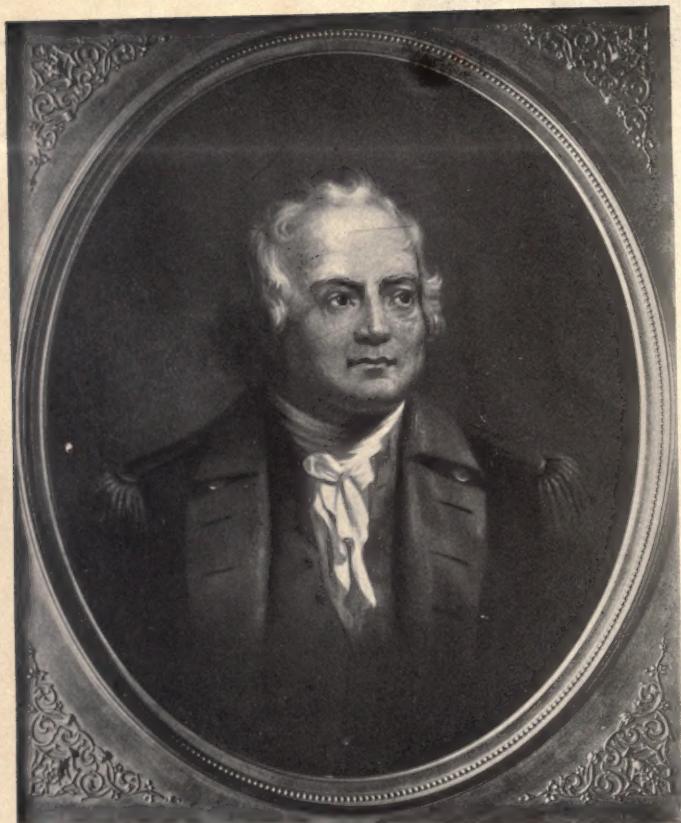












GENERAL ISRAEL PUTNAM.

FROM THE PAINTING BY H. I. THOMPSON, IN THE STATE HOUSE, HARTFORD, CONN.

# Israel Putnam

PIONEER, RANGER, AND MAJOR-GENERAL

1718-1790

BY

WILLIAM FARRAND LIVINGSTON

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G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS  
NEW YORK & LONDON  
The Knickerbocker Press

1905

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**WILLIAM FARRAND LIVINGSTON**

**The Knickerbocker Press, New York**



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To  
MY ALMA MATER  
WILLIAMS COLLEGE  
FOUNDED BY THE GALLANT SOLDIER  
COLONEL EPHRAIM WILLIAMS  
UNDER WHOSE COMMAND  
ISRAEL PUTNAM  
MARCHED INTO HIS FIRST BATTLE





## PREFACE



ORTUNATELY I have had access to some original sources of information relating to Israel Putnam which have never before been used in any formal presentation of his life. These documents include his official reports as a ranger or scout in the French and Indian War ; the diary which he kept on his voyage to the South ; his General Orders in the Havana Campaign and the American Revolution ; and letters by his own hand or dictated by him at different periods of his life. His holograph writings, characterised as they are by a greater number of literary defects than was common even in those days when men spelled incorrectly, punctuated carelessly, and used capitals with lawless frequency, plainly show that he had little training or inclination for composition. His was the education by an adventurous and purposeful life. It was this that made him a notable figure among American heroes. New light is thrown upon Putnam's career not only by the material of which he was the author, but also by the journals, letters, and other writings of many of his comrades and associates. These contemporary documents give us a truer and even more thrilling impression of his daring deeds than the exaggerated versions



of his exploits that have appeared in many of the later accounts of his life. Numerous facts, not generally known, which relate to Putnam before the American Revolution and which are presented in this biography, emphasise a period of his life that had a very important relation to his subsequent military service. The reputation for indomitable courage, ready resourcefulness, practical efficiency, sterling integrity, and warm-hearted companionableness that he gained in the colonial wars was of invaluable help in the first years of the American Revolution, for it inspired the patriots under his leadership with glowing enthusiasm and bold confidence in their struggle for freedom.

In the preparation of this book I have received favours from many persons, among whom have been Mr. Herbert Putnam, of Washington, D. C., Librarian of Congress; Mr. Albert C. Bates, of Hartford, Conn., Librarian of the Connecticut Historical Society; Rev. Alfred P. Putnam, D.D., of Salem, Mass.; Mr. Eben Putnam, of Burlington, Vt.; Mrs. Julia A. Philbrick, of Danvers, Mass.; and Mrs. Mary Putnam Bosworth, of New York City. I have appreciated especially the kindness of the Hon. Leonard D. Carver, State Librarian of Maine, who has afforded me every facility in the use of the valuable collection of historical works in the Maine State Library. I wish to acknowledge also the courtesies of Mr. Ernest W. Emery, Assistant Librarian of Maine, Col. E. C. Stevens, Superintendent of Public Buildings of Maine, and Miss Annie F. Page, Librarian of the Hubbard Library, Hallowell, Maine.

AUGUSTA, MAINE, July, 1901.



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COAT-OF-ARMS OF THE  
PUTNAM FAMILY.





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ISRAEL PUTNAM





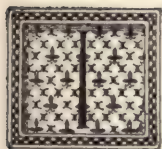
# ISRAEL PUTNAM

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## CHAPTER I

### IN OLD SALEM VILLAGE

1718-1740



IN the upper chamber of a colonial homestead at the foot of Hathorne Hill in Salem Village, now Danvers, Massachusetts, there was born, January 7, 1718, the twelfth child of Joseph and Elizabeth (Porter) Putnam. These Puritan parents, who in their calendar knew no such festival as Candlemas, happened to choose it as the date for the baptism of their infant son. So on the second of February,—the ceremonial day across the ocean for candles to be ablaze on altars and in processions—the babe, nearly a month old, was taken to the bare little meeting-house on Watch-House Hill ; and there, at his baptism by the Rev. Peter Clark, he was given the name of Israel after his mother's father, Israel Porter.

The paternal great-grandfather of little Israel had

been one of the original settlers of Salem Village. This ancestor, John Putnam, who belonged to the ancient family in England of which George Puttenham, the author of the *Arte of English Poesie*, was a distinguished member, had emigrated, with his wife Priscilla and children, from Aston Abbotts, Buckinghamshire. He made his new home, in America, on a grant of land which he received as early as 1641 in the northern part of the territory included in the town of Salem. He became a prosperous farmer and, at his death in 1662, left to his three sons an estate which, together with the property acquired by themselves, made them the largest taxpayers in the community. These Putnams—Thomas, Nathaniel, and John—were men of energy, thrift, and uprightness, and held important offices in town, military, and parish affairs. Thomas, whose wife, Ann Holyoke, died in 1665, married in the following year, Mary Veren, widow of Nathaniel Veren, a wealthy merchant of Salem. To Joseph, his son by this second wife, Thomas Putnam bequeathed the house\* which he had built in 1648 at the foot of Hathorne Hill. Here the young man, who became Israel's father, brought his bride, Elizabeth Porter, in 1690. Two years later, when the witchcraft delusion was at its height, Joseph Putnam did everything to show his disapproval of the course which the Rev. Samuel Parris and the principal men in Salem Village were pursuing.†

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\* This house, which is still standing, has been inherited successively by descendants of Thomas Putnam. Twice at least—once about 1744, and again in 1831,—it has been enlarged and remodelled. In 1897, "The Israel Putnam Chapter" of the Daughters of the American Revolution placed a bronze tablet upon the house to mark it as the birthplace of Israel Putnam.

† Upham, *Salem Witchcraft*.





OLD PUTNAM HOUSE, DANVERS, MASS. (SHOWING SOUTH SIDE), BIRTH-PLACE OF GENERAL ISRAEL PUTNAM.



In the excitement of the time, no ties of kinship or religion could protect a person who had censured his pastor and had dared to sympathise with persons accused or condemned as witches. Not only was disfavour expressed towards Joseph by his half-brothers, Sergeant Thomas Putnam and Deacon Edward Putnam, but the bitterness of feeling, the rancour, the horror, of the superstitious folk vented itself upon him so that his life was imperilled. For six months, until the witchcraft days were ended, he kept his firelock loaded and within ready reach and his swiftest horse always saddled in the stable, in order to defend himself and escape at a moment's warning, if his enemies, some of them his own relatives, attempted to arrest him. Warm sympathy for all persons wrongfully accused, ready generosity, and indomitable courage, these strong elements of character were the birthright of Joseph Putnam's son.

On his mother's side, also, Israel Putnam came of sterling stock. Elizabeth Putnam was the granddaughter of John Porter, "Farmer Porter," as he was called, a man of "good repute for piety, honesty, and estate," who had emigrated from England and settled in Salem Village about the same time as the first Putnams.\* His son Israel—the grandfather after whom Israel Putnam was named—married Elizabeth Hathorne, daughter of one of the most influential men in the colony. This was William Hathorne, who came to America from Wiltshire, England, in 1630, and settled first in Dorchester, Massachusetts, but soon afterwards removed to Salem, which had granted him large tracts of land as an inducement for him to live there, the

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\* J. W. Porter, *Genealogy of Porter Family*.

inhabitants of the town regarding such a citizen as a "public benefit." Among the ancestors of Israel Putnam there is no more striking personage than this maternal great-grandfather, whom Nathaniel Hawthorne, also a lineal descendant (he preferred to spell the family name with the *w*), pictures, in writing of old Salem, as the "grave, bearded, sable-cloaked, and steeple-crowned progenitor, who came so early, with his Bible and his sword, and trod the unworn street with such a stately port, and made so large a figure as a man of war and peace." William Hathorne was a soldier, legislator, judge; he was a leader in old Salem and had all the Puritan traits.

It was in the place so closely associated with the story of his ancestors in America that the first part of the boyhood of Israel Putnam was spent. Of the thirteen children who were born to Joseph and Elizabeth Putnam, eleven were living at the time of their father's death. Israel, the youngest but one, was then only five years old. Three of his sisters, Mary, Elizabeth, and Sarah, were already married, and Rachel's wedding day was this same year, 1723. William, the eldest son, was twenty-three years of age. The children at home, besides Israel, were Anne, David, Eunice, Huldah, and little Mehitabel, whose ages ranged from eighteen to three years.\* In the will which Joseph Putnam made a short time before his death he provided for his wife, bequeathed money to all his daughters, and landed property to his sons. William's share of the estate was the "Old Farm." The inheritance of David and Israel included the homestead. The widowed mother was to have for her own support and that of the children under age, the use of

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\* Eben Putnam, *History of Putnam Family*.

HERE WAS BORN

GEN. ISRAEL PUTNAM

JANUARY 7 1713

PLACED BY  
GEN. ISRAEL PUTNAM CHAPTER  
DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION  
1897





the property of David and Israel until these sons came into full possession of their inheritance. At that time they were to pay her "yearly the sum of Ten Pounds each in Payable money, in ye whole Twenty Pounds." She was "also to have a Room or two" in the homestead. But widow Elizabeth was married, in 1727, to Captain Thomas Perley, of Boxford, Massachusetts. David was almost of age and could assume the care of the homestead. The younger children went with their mother to the home of their stepfather, and it was there that Israel, who was now ten years of age, lived until he was old enough to take charge of the portion of the farm which his father left to him. Meanwhile he frequently visited his brothers and the relatives at Salem Village.

Israel was an active, robust youth. Books were few and school terms short and so in a sense he was turned loose upon nature,—and nature can teach boys wonderful things. He loved the out-of-door life, for that was his element, and the sports with his companions were an outburst of the healthy natural impulse to run, to race, to leap, to turn handsprings, to wrestle, to feel no restraint of exuberant spirits. In the athletic contests with his young friends, Israel was the champion and at all times he was a favourite playmate.

As for fearlessness, this vigorous, healthy boy seems to have been infused with it. There is the story of his climbing out so far into a tree one day when he was hunting birds' nests that the bough broke. A lower branch caught him as he fell, and he hung by his clothes, head downwards, his hands wildly beating the air for something to grasp and his feet vainly struggling for a resting-place. His companions saw no way to help him and continued to stand looking up at him

from the foot of the tree, but Israel shouted to one of them, who had a gun, to break the branch by sending a bullet into it. The boy hesitated from lack of confidence in his own skill as a marksman, but Israel persisted in taking the risk of being hit rather than to remain longer in his predicament. So the gun was fired with the happy result of freeing him from his mid-air position. Down he came, and luckily none of his bones were broken by the fall. The next day, notwithstanding his bruises, he ventured again into the tree and succeeded in getting the coveted nest.

Israel was a lad of self-respecting spirit. The following anecdote is told by Colonel David Humphreys about this country boy, who bore ridicule from a city youth until insulted pride considered patience no longer a virtue:

“The first time he went to Boston, he was insulted for his rusticity by a boy of twice his size and age; after bearing the sarcasms until his patience was worn out, he challenged, engaged, and vanquished his unmannerly antagonist to the great diversion of a crowd of spectators.”

Young Putnam early developed a chivalrous nature, for he came very near having a similar muscular encounter in the vicinity of his own home with a boy who had been sneering at and deriding a neighbour's daughter for no other reason than that her parents were poor. Israel resented such unfeeling behaviour and was about to teach the offending school-fellow a summary lesson in manners when the coward made a retreat.

Several years before the boy-farmer became of age he was fully able to do the work of a man, and seems to have taken considerable pride in keeping pace



CHAMBER IN WHICH ISRAEL PUTNAM WAS BORN.





with the men. Sometimes he had no difficulty in excelling them. He had a decided inclination for this agricultural life. There was an opportunity for his daring as well as his strength, and we have the story of his taming a vicious bull. Having put on spurs, he caught the animal in an open field and leaped astride his back. There he clung, riding furiously around the pasture, and then on into a swamp until the bull was utterly subdued.\*

One other anecdote is told, relating to Putnam at this period. He was called in by a neighbour to help in whipping a refractory negro. The coloured man's stubbornness, however, had been caused in part by the hot-tempered treatment which he had received from his master. While the latter was trying to hold "Cudge" so that he could be tied for the lashing, Putnam deftly slipped the noose over them both and, having pinioned them thus, drew them up in the barn by means of the rope, one end of which had been thrown over a beam. There he left them struggling aloft while he went off to enjoy his joke before he should release them. The affair ended much better than might have been expected, for the negro was amused, and the master, although at first very angry at Putnam, was convinced, after all, that the good humour into which the black man was put was more effective than a dozen floggings.

While he was still under age, Putnam practically assumed the charge of the Salem Village farm with his brother David. A portion of the estate was definitely set apart as Israel's share in 1738, in his twenty-first year, and there he built a house for a home of his own in a field near his birthplace.

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\* Hanson, *History of Danvers, Mass.*

About four miles away in the south-west part of Salem Village and near the boundary line which separated the town from Lynn, lived Israel's sweetheart, Hannah Pope. She was the daughter of Joseph and Mehitable Pope, and her first ancestors in America, like those of her lover, had been among the earliest settlers of the town.\* On July 19, 1739, in the Pope homestead, Israel Putnam and Hannah Pope were married. The young husband took his wife of eighteen years of age to the house which he had just built upon his farm and there they began housekeeping.

There, also, their first child was born. He was baptised on the eighth day of June, 1740, and was given the name of Israel after his father.

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\* C. H. Pope, *History of Pope Family*.





MEETING-HOUSE OF 1701, IN OLD SALEM VILLAGE, NOW  
DANVERS, MASS., IN WHICH ISRAEL PUTNAM WAS  
BAPTISED ON FEBRUARY 2, 1718.





## CHAPTER II

### THE CONNECTICUT PIONEER

1740-1754



WITHIN two years after building his house upon the share of the farm which he had inherited, Putnam began to make plans to remove from his native town to another colony. Reports had reached him of the value of lands in the eastern part of Connecticut for cultivation. Families from Salem, Lynn, and other towns of Massachusetts Bay had left the farms which had been tilled for several generations, and established homes in the neighbouring colony. The stories which came back of the prosperity of these pioneers made many young men, whose sires and grandsires had lived in one spot, ambitious to seek their fortunes in the new region.

It was with money obtained by the sale of land in Salem Village, that Putnam was able to buy a farm in Connecticut. The old records show that for seven different portions of his inheritance which he sold to his brother David and other persons about 1740, he received £1920. His first purchase of land in Connecticut was made in partnership with his brother-in-law, Joseph Pope, who like himself was twenty-one years old.



The transaction occurred March 15, 1739, with Governor Jonathan Belcher, of Boston, from whom the young men obtained 514½ acres, for the sum of £2572 10s.—at the rate of £5 an acre—payable in bills of credit on the province of Massachusetts. They gave bond and mortgage for the payment of this amount. The tract of land was situated in a district then known as "Mortlake," which twelve years later was formally annexed to the town of Pomfret by the General Assembly of Connecticut and which, in 1786, became a part of the town of Brooklyn. The present boundary line between Pomfret and Brooklyn passes through the land which Israel Putnam and Joseph Pope jointly bought of Governor Belcher. These young men were practically pioneers of the region, for the history of the Mortlake district shows that a large part of it was in its primitive condition at the time of their purchase.

Putnam may have made a special journey to Connecticut in 1739, but he did not take his wife and baby there before the summer or autumn of 1740.\* The distance was more than seventy-five miles. In those days travelling was slow and tedious. Putnam's first work on his new possessions was to build a small house† and clear as much land as possible for cultivation. Indeed, from the very beginning of his Connecticut life, he applied himself so industriously and energetically

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\* The date usually given is 1739, but the fact that his first child was born in Salem Village in 1740, and was baptised in June of that year in the same town would indicate that Putnam did not remove his family to Connecticut before 1740.

† The site of this house is now known by some foundation stones; and for many years after Putnam's death it was also marked by a pear tree which he planted and a well which he dug.

to work, that he was unusually prosperous. Within two years he had not only bought out Joseph Pope's share of the property, but had paid all indebtedness to Governor Belcher, who released the mortgage and gave a quitclaim to Putnam on June 13, 1741. Part of the money, which was used in securing this full title to the farm, came to Putnam from the sale of remaining portions of his inheritance in Salem Village. His Connecticut estate yielded him good returns for the labour which he vigorously spent upon it with the assistance of his negro servant. The farm was advantageously situated. A part of the land was level and the rest gently sloping. The soil was fertile and readily cultivated. Besides obtaining timber for farm buildings, enclosing his fields with stone fences, sowing and reaping, caring for his live stock, Putnam took much interest in planting and grafting fruit trees, and introduced several new varieties, especially the winter apple, "Roxbury Russet," which he brought with him from Salem.

Putnam had been living upon his farm two or more years when an incident occurred which was destined to be always closely associated with his name. This was the wolf-hunt in the winter of 1742-43. A she-wolf caused Putnam and some of the other settlers great loss by preying upon their sheepfolds. She had repeatedly eluded the hunters, although they were successful in killing most of her young. She frequently returned from the woods in the west and once barely escaped from a steel trap by tearing her paw from her claws which were caught in it. One night when prowling over Putnam's farm, she killed seventy of his sheep and goats, and lacerated many of the lambs and kids. In this exigency he and five Pomfret men ar-

ranged a continuous pursuit by agreeing to hunt alternately in pairs. Fortunately a light snow had fallen and the course of the wolf could be easily traced. The tracks showed one foot to be shorter than the other paws. This was proof that the animal was the same which had previously lost some of her claws in the trap. On reaching the Connecticut River, the hunters found that the wolf had turned in the opposite direction. Following the trail back towards Pomfret and travelling all night, they arrived within about three miles of Putnam's farmhouse at ten o'clock in the morning, when John Sharp, a lad of seventeen years of age, who had outstripped the other pursuers, discovered the den into which the wolf had been driven by the bloodhounds. The news of the location of her lair spread rapidly, and many persons, armed with guns and supplied with material for smoking her out, hastened to the place, which was among the granite boulders on the side of a steep, craggy hill.

The whole day was spent by Putnam and his neighbours in attempting to dislodge the animal, but the dogs—one of them Putnam's own hound—which were sent into the den returned frightened and badly wounded and would not go in again. Straw and sulphur were burned within the entrance, but without compelling the wolf to quit her hiding-place. Twelve unsuccessful hours passed away. It was already ten o'clock at night, yet Putnam felt the importance of continuing the efforts in the emergency. His negro servant being unwilling to enter the den and attempt to shoot the wolf, Putnam himself, notwithstanding the remonstrances of his neighbours against so perilous a venture, made ready to undertake it.

He took off his coat and waistcoat ; then he tied a



WOLF DEN, POMFRET, CONN.





long rope around his legs in order that he could be pulled back by it when he kicked it as a signal ; he lighted the torch which he had improvised from some strips of birch bark and, holding it in his hand, crawled into the cave. The entrance was about two feet square and very slippery on account of the ice. The den descended obliquely fifteen feet, then ran horizontally about ten feet more and ascended gradually sixteen feet to the end of the opening. It was not more than a yard wide in any part and it was so low overhead that in no place could a person raise himself from his hands and knees.

Crawling slowly down to the level part and continuing until he reached the gradual ascent, Putnam saw the fiery eyes of the wolf as she crouched at the end of the dark cave, gnashing her teeth and growling at him. He gave the signal which he had arranged, but the excited people, hearing the savage sound and thinking that he had been attacked, dragged him out with such solicitous but ill-judged energy that his shirt was stripped over his head and his skin severely scratched. He prepared himself to enter again, this time taking his gun, which he had loaded with nine buckshot. Holding it in one hand and a torch in the other, he advanced farther than before into the den and found the wolf even fiercer, howling, rolling her eyes, snapping her teeth, and dropping her head between her legs. He fired at her just as she was evidently about to spring upon him. Being instantly pulled out, he refreshed himself and waited for the smoke to disappear out of the den. He then made a third venture. When he approached the wolf this time he heard nothing from her and, touching her nose with his torch, found that she was dead. He grasped her ears, kicked the rope

and was drawn out, dragging his victim into the presence of the astonished and exultant people. Up the ragged and icy face of the hill and through the wild woodland the wolf was carried to a house a mile distant and suspended from a beam into which an iron spike had been driven. Then at that midnight hour a sort of "wolf jubilee" was held and, for several succeeding days, people came from different directions to see the animal.

The exploit won at once for Putnam a local reputation for great bravery. Afterwards, when he became famous as a hero in the French and Indian War and the American Revolution, the story of the wolf-hunt was universally told to illustrate his characteristic daring, and it gave him the sobriquet of "Old Wolf Putnam" during his military career. It is an interesting coincidence that the crest of the coat-of-arms belonging to the ancient family of Puttenham, and which is borne by the American branch, whose most distinguished member is the wolf-slayer, should be a wolf's head.

The story of Putnam and the wolf has had a special fascination as an American household tale. It was a favourite selection in the old reading-books. How many generations of boys have keenly enjoyed the anecdote of the bold deed!

But some serious narrators of the wolf-hunt, tempted by poetic license, have exaggerated the details. Indeed, the exploit has been told and retold by different writers with such variations that there has often been a wide departure from the facts. On the other hand, instead of exaggerations, there have been some attempts to discredit the adventure. We have, however, sufficient evidence for the stout-hearted deed, and we know that Putnam himself used to tell the story,



PUTNAM NARRATIVE: THE CAPTURE OF THE WOLF.

FROM A DRAWING BY T. F. HOPPIN.



Judge Samuel Putnam,\* in describing a visit which he once made to the hero, relates that Putnam took him to the place and showed him how he followed the wolf into the den and shot it. Colonel David Humphreys, who also heard Putnam's own account, realised the importance of giving us the facts, "because they contain a display of character; and because they have been erroneously repeated in several European publications, and very much mutilated in the *History of Connecticut* [satirical history by Rev. Samuel Peters, published in 1781], a work as replete with falsehood as destitute of genius."

The wolf-hunt has been often used as a subject for pictures, and some old engravings of it are very quaint. It suggested the device for a tavern sign when Gideon Putnam, nephew of Israel Putnam, built, in 1802, the first hotel at Saratoga Springs, New York. This old sign, which is still in existence, is a very curious representation of Putnam being pulled out of the den, dragging the wolf after him. Relic hunters have had peculiar interest in the exploit. Many years ago some of them exhibited in Boston a torch, made of birch-bark, which attracted much attention on account of the claim that it was the original one with which Putnam lighted his way into the den. Tradition says that the musket which was used to kill the wolf was carried by the hero through the French and Indian War, but soon afterwards was accidentally lost overboard while he was crossing a river in a boat.

The wolf den continues to be one of the most interesting spots in picturesque Pomfret, and is annually visited by many patriot pilgrims.

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\* Letter to Colonel Perley Putnam, dated July 16, 1834.



Putnam made a journey to his old home in Salem Village in the latter part of 1743. His brother David, now thirty-six years old, was becoming one of the most influential citizens in town, parish, and military affairs. He had won considerable reputation as a dashing cavalry officer. He rode the "best horse in the province," and was called "the lion-hearted Lieutenant of the King's troops." At the time that Israel visited him, David was planning to enlarge the homestead, and the two brothers must have often talked over together the proposed changes, as well as those public matters in which David was taking an active part. And Israel had much to tell of his own experiences and successes in his new home.

Soon after his return to Connecticut we find Israel Putnam of practical service in town and parish affairs. He applied himself also as industriously as ever to the development of his farm. The thrifty routine of his agricultural life at Pomfret continued without interruption until 1755. Then began an important period of new experiences.





## CHAPTER III

### THE CALL TO ARMS

1755



**I**SRAEL PUTNAM was thirty-seven years old when the disturbed condition of affairs in the English colonies reached a dangerous climax. The ambition for supremacy in America had been for years the cause of turmoil between the English and the French, but it had comparatively little interest for the New England farmers until it imperilled their homes. Then they became thoroughly aroused, especially on account of the threatening danger from the revengeful Indians whom the French had been enticing into their own service. The war, which is known in history as the Seven Years' War, was the fourth between England and France. The American phase of the conflict—commonly called the French and Indian War—began in 1755, in advance of the formal declaration of war. The commander-in-chief of the campaign was General Edward Braddock. Of the four expeditions which were planned by the British and colonial authorities, one was against Fort Duquesne, another against the French in Acadia, the third against Fort Niagara, while the fourth—the movement

in which Putnam bore a part—was against Crown Point.

When the stirring appeal for volunteers was made throughout Connecticut, as elsewhere, Israel Putnam was one of the first persons in his colony to respond. Fifteen years had now passed away since he had removed from his Massachusetts home to the tract of land which he had bought in Connecticut, years which had been spent so assiduously in the cultivation of the new soil, that the farm was yielding as good, if not better, results than any other in the vicinity, and the neighbours acknowledged its owner to be “a skilful and indefatigable manager.” A further evidence of his prosperity was the new and comfortable house which he had built nearly a fourth of a mile south-east of the first one. With money from the sale of the surplusage of his farm products, he was able to furnish this more ample home for his family with some articles which were considered luxuries in those days. Putnam’s domestic life was a happy one. His wife, Hannah, had shared sympathetically with him in the experiences of the new country, and both of them enjoyed the household comforts all the more because of the hardships and the necessary privations of the earlier days in Connecticut. Putnam was also bound closely to his home by his children. His son Israel was now fifteen years old. Daniel,\* two years younger, was born March 10, 1742. There were four little daughters, between the ages of

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\* The name of this son, who died at the age of seventeen, is usually given as David, by confusion with a child who was born to Putnam in 1759, after the death of his second son, and who was also named Daniel. The gravestone in the cemetery at Brooklyn, Conn., has the name *Daniel*, instead of David, in the inscription relating to the second son.

eleven and two years,—Hannah, born August 25, 1744 ; Elizabeth, March 20, 1747 ; Melitable, October 21, 1749 ; and Mary, May 10, 1753. When Putnam obeyed the call to arms it meant leaving a family behind him which demanded in many special ways a father's care and forethought. There were, besides, the manifold matters connected with the farm, but these and all other things were subordinate to the imperative need of men to defend the colonies in the grave exigency.

In the early summer of 1755, Putnam had bidden his family good-by and was on the march towards Albany in the band of volunteers, his wife having bravely taken charge of the farm, with the help of the two boys, Israel and Daniel. The advance of the Connecticut men across the country was slow, owing to the natural impediments of the rough and wooded region. When they reached Albany they encamped just outside the town upon the plains where the forces from the other colonies were also assembling. In July, the provincial army for the Crown Point enterprise numbered about three thousand men ; an unsoldier-like gathering as to outward appearance, for it was composed chiefly of farmers who wore their ordinary clothing, and few of them had any military experience. Like most of the other volunteers, the men from Connecticut had brought their own firelocks, hatchets, belts, cartridge-boxes, and blankets. But the crude army, which the enemy considered a mere " mob of countrymen " that could be easily routed, contained sterling material.

The provincial soldiers were joined at Albany by a band of Indian allies, whose chief was the " brave and sagacious " Hendrick. Putnam himself must have witnessed the goodwill which these Mohawks showed



towards William Johnson, the commander of the Crown Point expedition. They adorned the General's face with war-paint, and he danced the war-dance, we are told, and then with his sword he cut the first slice from the ox that had been roasted whole for their entertainment.

In midsummer the main army was ordered northward under General Phineas Lyman of Connecticut; and Putnam was one of the soldiers who marched the distance of nearly forty miles along the bank of the Hudson River to the Great Carrying Place. Here several weeks were spent by the troops in building a fort which was first called Fort Lyman — a name that was afterwards changed to Fort Edward in honour of the Duke of York. On the 21st of August, General Johnson, who was still at Albany for the purpose of forwarding the bateaux, artillery, and provisions, learned from Mohawk scouts that the French were advancing in overwhelming numbers to defend Crown Point. He immediately called a council of war. The advice was to send to the different colonies for reinforcements. In response to Johnson's appeal, a special session of the General Assembly of Connecticut was convened by Governor Fitch on the 27th of August at Hartford, and it was resolved that the colony furnish, in addition to the thousand volunteers already sent, fifteen hundred men who should be formed into two regiments—known as the Third and Fourth—with nine companies in each regiment. The Assembly proceeded to the appointment of officers and selected Israel Putnam for second Lieutenant of the Sixth Company in the Third Regiment.\* Putnam's commission did not reach him until after the battle of Lake George, which took place on

\* *Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut*, vol. x., p. 399.



the 8th of September. He was, therefore, a private in that encounter.\* The bloody battle, so memorable in the annals of the colonial wars, was fought not long after the provincial troops reached the southern extremity of Lake George. General Johnson had joined the main body of the army, and had ordered it, on the 26th of August, to advance from the Hudson River across the country, a distance of fourteen miles, while a detachment of five hundred men remained to garrison the fort. The way through the forests and thick undergrowth was hewn by gangs of axemen, and the two thousand soldiers moved forward towards Lake George. There they arrived in the afternoon of the same day on which they had left Fort Lyman. The camp was pitched near the low hill where Fort George was afterwards built; and the tired men looked out over the placid waters of the lake, beautiful in the wild charm of the encircling ridge of forest-topped mountains.

During the first fortnight nothing alarming happened in the camp at Lake George, and the attention of the soldiers was occupied a part of the time in various duties; but on the whole little was done in felling trees or preparing for defence against the enemy, General Johnson himself fearing little immediate danger. On the afternoon of the first Sunday, Putnam was among the men who heard young Chaplain Newell expound the somewhat untimely text, "Love your enemies." A week later, on September 7th, at sunset of a beautiful Sunday and soon after Chaplain Williams had finished preaching, there was an alarm in camp. An Indian scout had arrived and reported traces of the enemy advancing from South Bay towards

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\* Some writers make the error of speaking of Putnam as an officer instead of a private in the battle of Lake George.

Fort Lyman. Johnson at once sent a mounted messenger to warn the commander at the latter place, but expected no immediate attack upon his own troops.

Baron Dieskau, who commanded the French force, had not only reached Crown Point with more than thirty-five hundred men, but had decided upon an aggressive movement from that stronghold. An English prisoner had deceived him into believing that the main body of Johnson's army had returned to Albany. Therefore Dieskau's plan was to surprise the garrison at Fort Lyman. When he was within three miles of the Hudson River, however, he learned from waggoners, who had deserted the English camp and were taken prisoners, that most of the English troops were at the Lake. This caused him to change his plan. Besides, his Indian allies had already refused to advance farther towards Fort Lyman, having heard of cannon there, but they were willing to go with him to Lake George. Moreover, the messenger, whom Johnson had dispatched to warn the fort, had been shot by Indians who were with the French, and the letter which he was carrying had been discovered.

Meantime, the English at Lake George had been warned again that the enemy were in the vicinity, this time by some of the mutinous drivers who had returned to the camp after being attacked by the French. A council of war, which Johnson had called in the morning of September 8th, decided to send out a thousand men under Colonel Ephraim Williams. This detachment was accompanied by Hendrick, the Mohawk chief, with his two hundred warriors. The soldiers—one of them was Putnam—who marched out of camp that Monday morning, a little after eight o'clock, were soon to be engaged in a bloody and desperate encounter.

When Dieskau was three miles from the lake, he was informed by a prisoner whom his scouts had just taken, that the English were coming. He immediately prepared to meet them. Keeping his regulars in the road, he ordered the Canadians and Indians to occupy positions in the front, where, by hiding among the thickets and rocks and in the forest along the slopes of the mountain, they would form an ambush, horse-shoe in shape. As the English approached, Dieskau's stratagem was not altogether successful, for some of his Indians, either by accident or design, gave the alarm to the Mohawks who were with Colonel Williams. But before the English could take advantage of the warning from a gun which was discharged from the bushes, a murderous fire poured out upon them from the thickets on the left. Many men fell, and the head of the column, as Dieskau himself said, "was doubled up like a pack of cards." From the slopes of the hill on the right came also a deadly fire upon the English ranks. They recoiled in utter confusion under this sudden attack. The yelling enemy approached in terrific onrush. Colonel Williams and old Hendrick were among the many who fell dead. The regiment would have been annihilated, had it not been for the intrepid conduct of Putnam and other soldiers who supported Lieutenant-Colonel Nathan Whiting, the gallant Connecticut officer, upon whom now, after the death of Colonel Williams, devolved the command of the whole. The men, who rallied under Whiting's leadership and covered the retreat of the broken column, fought from behind trees like Indians, and after firing, fell back by turns. With the assistance of some of the Mohawks, as well as a detachment which Johnson sent, they made, in the words of Seth

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Pomeroy (Putnam's comrade), "a very handsome retreat, and so continued till they came within about three-quarters of a mile of our camp. This was the last fire our men gave our enemies, which killed great numbers of them; they were seen to drop as pigeons."

After Dieskau had halted within a mile of the English camp, he collected his scattered troops and prepared to make the final assault. At this time Johnson's men were hastily throwing up a barricade of waggons, bateaux, trunks of trees, and every available material. Cannon were being planted and guards for the flanks of the camp detailed. The soldiers were taking their position behind the crude fortification as fast as any part of it offered them protection. Some of the men were standing up behind the waggons, and others were lying flat behind the logs and boats. On the left of the line towards the hill were the Connecticut troops; Putnam himself had rejoined them, for the soldiers of the detachment, who were not disabled in the "bloody morning scout," were ordered to take part in this second stage of the battle.

Soon the enemy appeared in sight. The regulars approached in the road; while along the front rose fearful yells and war-whoops, and, as Pomeroy says, "the Canadians and Indians, helter-skelter, the woods full of them, came running with undaunted courage right down the hill upon us, expecting to make us flee." A furious engagement followed. Dieskau first attacked the English left and centre. Putnam was in the hottest part of the fight. Pomeroy, who was not far from him, afterwards wrote, "perhaps the hailstones from heaven were never much thicker than their bullets came; but, blessed be God! that did not in the least daunt or disturb us." From the beginning of the



assault, the French lost control of their Indian allies, who scattered everywhere, raising the war-whoop and fighting, according to their own custom, from behind trees. When Dieskau found that he could make no impression upon the English left and centre, he attempted to force their right, but failed there also. At length he was wounded and taken prisoner. Meanwhile, on the English side, Johnson had been shot in the thigh, and Lyman, who had taken the command, was bravely continuing the battle and making a firm resistance. At last, towards five o'clock in the afternoon, the enemy gave way, and in the final rout the English leaped over the barricade and rushed forward, shouting, brandishing their hatchets, and using the butts of their guns for clubs in the hand-to-hand encounter. The French fled in great confusion. Nearly all of their officers and nearly half of their regular troops had been killed or wounded. Their Canadian and Indian allies had suffered less disastrously, having kept themselves more under cover.

The English lost two hundred and sixty-two men, killed, wounded, and missing. The provincial soldiers, according to contemporary testimony, "in the morning fought like good boys, about noon like men, and in the afternoon like devils." Many of them spent the following night and the next few days in picking up the wounded and in burying the dead. For this purpose, which he describes as a "melancholy piece of business," Pomeroy commanded four hundred men, one of whom appears to have been Putnam.

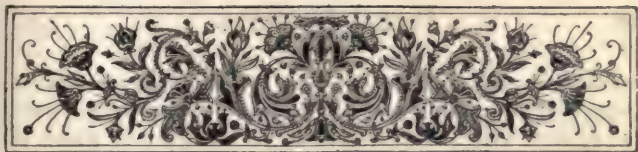
Putnam, like many another provincial, was eager for Johnson to follow up the victory and pursue the French; but, instead of doing so, that General set the soldiers to work in building a breastwork and fort near the camp,



for, said he, "we may expect very shortly a more formidable attack." The French, however, retired to Ticonderoga, where, within two weeks, they strongly fortified themselves.

Soon after the battle the additional troops from the colonies began to arrive at the lake, and among them were the two regiments from Connecticut, in one of which, as we have seen, Putnam had been appointed a second Lieutenant. There came also into camp in September a partisan chief, whom Putnam had already seen at Albany. This was Robert Rogers, who, with a hundred men, had escorted the provision waggons in August from the latter place to the spot where Fort Lyman was built. Within a few days after Rogers arrived at Lake George, Johnson, who was still apprehensive of another aggressive movement of the French, ordered him to reconnoitre Crown Point. This was the first of several expeditions, after the battle, to the vicinity of the enemy's strongholds, and in a number of these attempts Putnam was one of the men who accompanied Rogers. There was something about the Connecticut farmer-soldier that led the Captain of the rangers to choose him as a suitable companion in the hazardous undertakings, and for this important and peculiar service Putnam showed at once a special aptitude.





## CHAPTER IV

### THE RANGER

1755-1756



It was as one of Rogers's Rangers that Putnam had special opportunities for winning distinction in the French and Indian War. It had become increasingly apparent that under existing circumstances, in the region thickly wooded and infested with Indians lying in ambush, the ordinary soldiers were appallingly at disadvantage. There were needed, for special duties, men capable of understanding Indian methods of warfare, who could scour the forests and make daring reconnoissances. Such men should be of vigorous and strong constitution. They should be able to make long marches, endure the hardships of a woodsman's life, and ever be ready to outwit the enemy. The provincial rangers were selected to serve in a corps, independent of the main army. Besides their duties of venturing near the hostile strongholds, and surprising straggling parties and taking prisoners, they were, "from time to time," according to their instructions,

"to use their best endeavours to distress the French and their allies, by sacking, burning, and destroying their houses, barns,

barracks, canoes, battoes, etc., and by killing their cattle of every kind; and at all times to endeavour to way-lay, attack and destroy their convoys of provisions by land and water, in any part of the country where they could find them."

The appointment of Robert Rogers of New Hampshire as the commander of this band of men was wise, for he was experienced in woodcraft; he had the qualifications for a successful partisan officer,—robustness, energy, sagacity, tenacity, promptness, and caution. This leader and his valued associates, chief among whom were Israel Putnam and John Stark, became, as the historian Francis Parkman says, "famous throughout America; and though it was the fashion of the day to sneer at the efforts of provincial troops, the name of Rogers's Rangers was never mentioned but with honour."

The account of the ranging service which Rogers gives in his journal \* is written in a simple, direct way, and does not appear to be exaggerated. The official †

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\* This work was published in London, in 1765, "for the author" during the visit of Rogers to England, after he had served through the French and Indian War and Pontiac's War. It had this title, *Journals of Major Robert Rogers, containing an account of the several excursions he made under the generals who commanded during the late war*. Sold by J. Millan, Bookseller, Whitehall, 1765. It was republished in Dublin, in 1769, by R. Acheson. In 1831, it appeared in a condensed form in a book called *Reminiscences of the French War*, which was edited by Caleb Stark, Jr., and published by Luther Roby, at Concord, N. H. It may also be found in an abridged form in Caleb Stark's *Memoir of John Stark*, Concord, N. H., 1860. The best edition is that by Franklin B. Hough, published at Albany, N. Y., 1883.

† Johnson Manuscripts in the State Library at Albany, N. Y. Several of these original reports are printed in the fourth volume of the *Documentary History of New York*.

reports, also, which Rogers, Putnam, and other provincial officers made to General Johnson are invaluable as original sources of information in regard to the exploits of the rangers whose "perfect mode of attack and defence" enabled "a hundred of them to do more service than thousands of the British regulars."

As for their method of scouting and fighting, there was no invariable rule among the rangers. Every one was governed by circumstances, and that man proved himself best qualified for this special service who was instinctively clever and resourceful enough for any emergency. On one occasion, Rogers wrote out a set of general rules for the instruction of some soldiers who were sent to him to be trained as rangers, but after he had described in considerable detail that which his own experience taught him was ordinarily necessary, he added that there were a thousand occurrences and circumstances which might happen and make it imperative to put other arts and stratagems in practice; "in which cases," said he, "every man's reason and judgment must be his guide, according to the particular situation and nature of things; and that he may do this to advantage, he should keep in mind a maxim never to be departed from by a commander, viz. : to preserve a firmness and presence of mind on every occasion."

Putnam was not only associated with Rogers in the ranging service, but also "became intimately acquainted" with him, for they had much in common in their love of adventure, capacity for physical endurance, and instinctive bravery. From a description by his grandson, Judge Judah Dana, we learn that Putnam was :

"in his person, for height, about the middle size, very erect, thickset, muscular, and firm in every part. His countenance



was open, strong, and animated ; the features of his face large, well-proportioned to each other and to his whole frame ; his teeth fair and sound till death. His organs and senses were all exactly fitted for a warrior ; he heard quickly, saw to an immense distance, and though he sometimes stammered in conversation, his voice was remarkably heavy, strong, and commanding."

On account of his qualifications, Putnam was not only selected as one of Rogers's men, but was assigned to special duties in the ranging service, with the rank of Captain. The adventurous undertakings which he shared at this period extended late into the autumn of 1755, while the main army remained in camp at Lake George.

With forty or fifty men in five boats, Rogers and Putnam left camp in the evening of the 7th day of October, and in advancing on the lake passed by three or four fires on the shore. When they had gone a distance of sixteen miles, they missed one bateau and unfortunately could not find it on account of the darkness. Continuing the journey, they landed at daybreak on the east side of the lake, and there, within twelve miles of the Carrying Place to Ticonderoga, lay concealed all day with their men. In the evening the rangers embarked again and proceeded on their way ; but, seeing a fire on an island, they put to land, and sent out men in a birch canoe to reconnoitre. The enemy on the island, having discovered the canoe, extinguished their fire and apparently retreated ; after which the rangers went forward five miles nearer the French stronghold and landed at a point on the west side of the lake. From that place, on the morning of October 9th, Rogers sent " Capt. Putnam with one man and Capt. Hunt with three men more in order to go to the Carry-



ing Place and Ticonderoga, and make discoveries there and return to the party."

In the evening, Captain Hunt, who had accompanied Putnam within two miles of the Carrying Place, returned to report that there were large numbers of the enemy in that vicinity on both sides of the lake; and that night, Rogers sent Ensign Timothy Putnam and three men in a birch canoe to make such additional discoveries as they could in the same locality. Meanwhile, Israel Putnam, with his companion, was spending the night on a mountain, near the shore of the lake, watching the fires of French and Indians, and trying to obtain all the information he could at that distance, for he had decided that it was not safe to proceed to Ticonderoga. Fortunately, we have his own account of his experiences from the time he left Rogers until he returned to him. It is as follows :

#### "REPORT OF CAPT. PUTNAM

"SENT BY CAPT. RODGERS AS A SPY TO TICONDEROGA

"Oct: 9th, 1755. Then left Cap: Rogers upon a neck of Land upon the west side of Lake George and Set out towards Tyconderogue to see what Discoveries we Could make and after we had march'd about 7 or 8 miles we came upon a Large Mountain near the Heither end of the narrows, and when we came there we Could make no Discovery at all, but after sometime wee espyed three Barke Cannoes Drew upon the Shore upon a point of Land that Ran into the Lake, and then wee espyed two Indians Comeing out of the Bushes toward the Cannoes, after water, and after sometime we espyed several french and Indians on the East side of the Lake and soon after that we heard the noise of Cutting, hewing, adsing, and sawing, as tho there was a Large Company of men at work, and by their talking and Laughing their was amongst them, and then we Espyed about thirty Indians Came out of the Bushes on the west side of the

Lake on the point within a large musket shot of us, and played a spell on the Beach, and Returned into the Bush, and from the point Eastward, their was almost a Continual fireing and barking of Doggs and talking so we tho<sup>t</sup> it was not safe to proceed to Tycondarogue and so Concluded to tarry there all knight and see what further Discoveries wee Could make by the fires in the knight, and just at the Dusk of the evening their Came four Cannoes from the East and went to the west side of the Lake and landed on the point where the others were incamped, and Drew up their Cannoes on y<sup>e</sup> Shore and by this time wee began to Discover the fires on the point and on the East side of the Lake, but Could not Discover what number their was, because the Bushes were so thick by the Lake but as near as we Could best Judge we tho<sup>t</sup> there was six or seven hundred by the fires and Guards set on both sides the Lake and about Day Brake, they mustered their men to work and then wee Left the mountain and Returned to Cap<sup>t</sup> Rogers on the point and when we Came within sixty or seventy Rods of the point we Espyed thirteen Indians pass by within ten Rods of us, towards the point where we left Cap<sup>t</sup> Rogers, and after they had passed by us, we Came to the point where we left Cap<sup>t</sup> Rogers, and found all well this is the Chef of the Discovery and best account that I am able to give.

“ISRAEL PUTNAM

“To Cap<sup>t</sup> Rodgers.

“The Report of Captain Putnen.

(Endorsed) “Cap<sup>t</sup> Pitmans Report  
who was sent by Cap<sup>t</sup>  
Rodgers as a Spy to  
Tiondorogo

deliv<sup>d</sup> 12 Oct<sup>r</sup>.”

Before Putnam returned to the place where the rangers were concealed, Rogers and his men had seen some of the enemy not far away. Just after the sentinels and scouts reported that they had overheard hostile voices, “Capt. Putnam instantly came back,” says Rogers, “with the account that the Indians were on our backs.” As the savage force seemed too strong to

be withstood, the rangers hastily entered their boats and started back towards the main encampment. After going fifteen miles, they lodged on an island, and on the following day, October 11th, arrived where the army was stationed.

But Rogers and several of his best men did not remain long in camp. It was only two days after the return of the scouting party, that General Johnson, in writing to Sir Charles Hardy, mentioned that the chief ranger purposed to set off at once "with two or more picked men, take a review, if he can, of Ticonderoga and proceed to Crown Point for a prisoner." One of the "picked men" to whom Johnson alluded was Putnam, and so the expedition has special interest for us. It proved to be the most dangerous undertaking in which he had yet shared as a scout. Rogers drew up an official report of it which Putnam also signed. In quoting this document, it seems well, for the sake of greater clearness, to change somewhat the orthography, and to adopt punctuation and division into sentences and paragraphs:

#### "REPORT OF CAPT. ROGERS AND CO.'S SCOUTS

"On the 14th day of October, 1755, I embarked in a birch canoe at the camps on the south end of Lake George, with four men beside myself, and sailed twenty-five miles, and landed on the west side of the lake. Then travelled by land, and on the 18th day I arrived on the mountains on the west side of Crown Point, where I lay that night and all the next day, and observed the enemy's motions there, and about Crown Point. Observed Ambussers built upon the mount, about thirty rods to the southwest of Crown Point fort. In the evening went down to the houses that were built upon the lake, to the south of Crown Point, and went into a barn that was well filled with wheat. Left three men and proceeded with one man to make further

discoveries at the fort. Found a good place to ambush within sixty rods of the fort, and immediately went back and took our partners, and ambushed at the proper place we had found."

At this point in the official report, the facts which Rogers has just stated need to be supplemented by the account of the same expedition which he gives in his journal. From the latter document we learn the serious predicament in which the members of the scouting-party found themselves next morning :

"My men lay concealed in a thicket of willows," says Rogers in his journal, "while I crept something nearer, to a large pine log, where I concealed myself by holding bushes in my hand. Soon after sun-rise the soldiers issued out in such numbers, that my men and I could not possibly join each other without a discovery."

For several hours that forenoon the rangers continued in their plight, as we find in taking up the official account again :

"There we lay till about ten o'clock. Observed several canoes passing up and down the lake, and sundry men that went out to work about their secular affairs, and judged the whole that was in the fort to be about five hundred."

The way in which Rogers finally extricated himself and his men is described both in his journal and in the report. In the former he says :

"About 10 o'clock a single man marched out directly towards our ambush. When I perceived him within ten yards of me, I sprung over the log, and met him, and offered him quarters, which he refused, and made a pass at me with a dirk, which I avoided, and presented my fusee to his breast ; but notwithstanding, he still pushed on with resolution, and obliged me to dispatch him. This gave an alarm to the enemy, and made it necessary for us to hasten to the mountain."



But Rogers does not mention in his journal the timely assistance which he received from one of his men in his encounter with the enemy who approached him. This additional information is contained in the official report, which gives an account of the same incident in these words:

“At length, a Frenchman came out of the fort towards us, without his gun, and came within fifteen rods of where we lay. Then I with another man ran up to him in order to capture him, but he refused to take quarters,—so we killed him, and took off his scalp, in plain sight of the fort,—then ran and in plain view about twenty rods and made our escape.”

The man who came to the assistance of Rogers was Putnam, according to the following version from Humphreys in his *Essay on the Life of Israel Putnam*:

“Captain Rogers, being at a little distance from Captain Putnam, fortuitously met a stout Frenchman, who instantly seized his fusee with one hand, and with the other attempted to stab him, while he called to an adjacent guard for assistance. The guard answered. Putnam, perceiving the imminent danger of his friend, and that no time was to be lost, or further alarm given by firing, ran rapidly to them, while they were yet struggling, and with the butt-end of his piece laid the Frenchman dead at his feet. The partisans, to elude pursuit, precipitated their flight, joined the party, and returned without loss to the encampment.”

Why did Rogers pass over in silence in his journal the timely help which Putnam gave him on this occasion? Jealousy in after years, when that writing was published (strange that Rogers should ever have had any such feeling toward the associate who saved his life!) seems to have been the reason for the omission.

The account of the expedition, from the time that the rangers escaped from their dangerous position near the



French fort until they returned to camp, is given in the following paragraph, with which the official report closes :

“ The same night we came right west of Ticonderoga, about three miles, and upon a mountain in plain sight of their fort, and saw large encampments around it, and heard a vast number of small arms fired. Judged there to be two thousand men at Ticonderoga. On the 21st day, got to our canoes about eight o'clock in the morning, and found all safe. About nine o'clock in the evening, arrived all well at our encampments from whence we had set out.”

A week after his return from Crown Point, with the four men who accompanied him, Rogers was ordered to scout again in the vicinity of the enemy's advanced guard. He had found Putnam of such valued service that he selected him again as one of his companions. The party on this occasion consisted of “ thirty men, in four battoes mounted with two wall-pieces each.” The earliest account of this expedition is the one addressed to General Johnson. Like the report of the undertaking just preceding, it was written by Rogers in the first person. It was signed by two scouts besides himself. They were Israel Putnam and Noah Grant. The experiences of the scouting-party were these :

“ Pursuant to your orders of the 29th of October last, I set off with the party to me ordered, and went down the lake, and on the 31st made a discovery of a number of fires by night, situated on a point of land on the west side of the lake, upon which we landed, and secured our bateaux, upon the same side of the lake, about a mile and a half distant from their encampment. Next morning sent out spies for further discovery.”

The “ spies ” were Putnam, Fletcher, and Robert Durkee. The report continues :

“ In the evening Captain Fletcher, one of the spies, returned, leaving two of the spies there, and made a report that there were four tents, and sundry small fires on the point, and upon that, after consultation, it was concluded advisable to acquaint your Honour [William Johnson] of our discovery, and reinforce us if you think it advisable in order to proceed further, and make a push upon our enemy. Accordingly, Capt. Fletcher was dispatched to you with six men in the bateau, and six being returned as invalids—leaving me with nineteen men only.”

After he had sent the detachment back to General Johnson, Rogers, “ being uneasy with the report ” of Fletcher in regard to the enemy’s position, made reconnoissance in person in a bateau, but made “ no further discovery.” On rejoining his men, he found that Putnam and his companion had not yet returned.

Putnam and Durkee were having a dangerous experience at “ The Ovens.” The enemy’s fires, instead of being placed, according to the English custom, round the camp, were grouped in the centre of it ; their men were stationed circularly, and the sentinels posted still farther in the surrounding darkness. Unaware of this arrangement, the two scouts crept upon their hands and knees towards the camp, expecting to see the sentinels within the circle of fires, but suddenly found themselves inside the hostile lines. The guards discovered the men and fired at them. In their flight in the darkness, Putnam soon stumbled into a clay-pit. His companion, although shot in the thigh, followed not far behind, and he, too, fell into the pit. Putnam, supposing his pursuer to be one of the enemy, was about to strike him with his hatchet, but at that moment recognised the voice of Durkee, who inquired whether he had escaped uninjured. They leaped out of the pit together, and, although again fired upon, reached a ledge not far distant.

"There they betook themselves to a large log," says Humphreys, "by the side of which they lodged the remainder of the night. Before they lay down, Captain Putnam said he had a little rum in his canteen, which could never be more acceptable or necessary; but on examining the canteen, which hung under his arm, he found the enemy had pierced it with their balls, and that there was not a drop of liquor left. The next day he found fourteen bullet-holes in his blanket." \*

Returning now to the report, and continuing it from the point where we left off, we find a reference in the official account to the clay-pit incident :

"The next morning about ten o'clock Capt. Putnam returned and the spy Durkee with him, who gave much the same account as Fletcher, saving that the enemy's sentries were set twenty rods from their fire, and that for a more critical examination of the enemy's proceedings he went forward till he came so nigh them that he was fired upon by one of the sentries within a rod of them. But, unfortunately, upon preparing to fire upon him, fell into a clay-pit and wet his gun. Then made the best retreat he was able; hearing the enemy close to their heels, they made a tack and luckily escaped safe to our party."

The enemy, in pursuing the two scouts, found out the hiding-place of all the rangers, but not until Put-

\* Humphreys and other writers mistake the date of this adventure, and give it as 1756, instead of 1755.

The statement in regard to "fourteen bullet holes" in the blanket has sometimes been exaggerated into the assertion that Putnam was hit by the same number of separate bullets. In criticism of such versions, Fellows, in his *Veil Removed*, wrote: "His (Putnam's) blanket was of course rolled up and slung upon his back, and therefore one ball might have perforated it in as many places as stated and at the same time passed through his canteen."

Cutter, in his *Life of Israel Putnam*, says: "Whether all this boring was the work of one leaden messenger from the French camp, or of many, it must be regarded as one of those remarkable escapes."

nam and Durkee had succeeded in rejoining their fellows:

“Soon after, there was a discovery made of two Frenchmen upon a hill a small distance, who called to us. Said hill overlooked our ambush. In a few minutes they retreated, and two canoes appeared and went by us, and lay in the middle of the lake about forty rods distance from each other.”

It was soon apparent to the rangers that the enemy intended to approach by both water and land, in making the attack. In this emergency, Rogers embarked with some of his men to meet the hostile force, which was not far away on the lake, and Putnam remained on shore in command of the rest of the scouting-party. Rogers describes the movements as follows :

“Judging by their behaviour that there was a party coming by land, and that we must inevitably be between two fires, I ordered two bateaux into the water ; Lieut. Grant with six men, and I with six more, and we put on board of each a wall-piece, and went out towards the canoes, who seemed to lie by their paddles, as though they had a design to decoy us into some mischief by their party, and that it was designed to surround our people on shore, and then attack us by keeping us between them and their party. Finding their design, we attacked them first, put them to rout and surprised them so that they made to the shore, where Capt. Putnam and the rest of our party lay.”

Next, comes the story of the efficient help which Rogers received from Putnam, who narrowly escaped death from the enemy's bullets :

“They [the enemy] made to the shore, but unhappily for them, he [Putnam] was prepared for them, and shot and killed their cockswain ; and by our wall-piece, etc., killed divers of them. But upon his firing upon their canoe, immediately the enemy that was upon his back, fired, and he had just time to shove his bateau out into the water, and get into it, before the



enemy appeared upon the water's edge, and made a brisk fire upon him. He was shot through his blanket in divers places, and through the bateau, and then he made to our bateaux for refuge. Upon his escape, we pursued the canoes with a constant fire upon them till we came within eighty rods of their fires. Discovered a number of men upon each side of the shore, within about forty rods of us, and gave each a broadside which put them to the bush, and gave us a clear passage homewards."

The fortunate result of the encounter was followed by mutual congratulations among the rangers and then the scouting-party returned to camp, as we learn in the closing words of the report :

"After we got fairly into the lake we lay upon upon our oars, and inquired after the circumstances of the party. Found none killed, but one wounded, which gave joy to all of us, after so long an engagement, which I judge was near two hours.

"And then we made the best of our way to our headquarters. About half way, we met with the reinforcements—but upon consultation, thought best to report what had happened, without further proceeding, and accordingly arrived here, to the encampment, the 3d [of November]."

Two weeks later we find Putnam in charge of a scouting-party which was sent to reconnoitre in the vicinity of South Bay for any signs of a hostile force approaching from that direction. On his return with his men, after an absence of nearly two days, he reported that he had seen no enemy, but had discovered several deserted camps. The hostile force had evidently withdrawn from the region.

During the autumn there was considerable suffering in camp, for the soldiers were too thinly clad for the inclement weather. Orders were finally issued for the main body of troops to break up camp. It had been decided, before the army left Lake George, that some of



the men from each colony should be employed during the winter in garrisoning Fort William Henry there, as well as Fort Edward on the Hudson River. Putnam was one of those retained, and on November 25th he was made Captain of a company, which by December 5th was stationed at Fort Edward. Some of these soldiers under his command were young men from the town of Pomfret and that vicinity, whom he had been active in securing as recruits about the time of his own enlistment. The energy and popularity of their leader was an inducement for them to remain for the special service during the winter months. While the other soldiers, then, dispersed to their homes, Putnam stayed with the men who were detailed to strengthen, complete, and equip the forts, and to improve the road between the Hudson River and the south-western extremity of Lake George. His company was also employed in scouting and ranging, but it is uncertain in just what expeditions. Rogers made several excursions towards the enemy's forts during the winter, but he does not mention Putnam in his account of these undertakings ; indeed, it is doubtful whether or not the two rangers were associated during the six months after the departure of the army, for their headquarters were different — Rogers remaining at Fort William Henry, while Putnam was transferred to Fort Edward. Although we do not have the particulars of the service which Putnam rendered in the winter of 1755-56, we know that it must have been of the same hazardous nature as that in the autumn, for a sharp guerrilla warfare was carried on with the enemy. The savages who infested the region were accustomed to all the perils of winter and wilderness, and, as allies of the French, were ready to improve every opportunity to

harass the English. Putnam was continually upon the alert.

Meanwhile, the wife at Pomfret must have had many anxious thoughts about the safety of her husband, from whom, on account of distance and isolation, she had scanty if any news at all, after the return of the soldiers in the early part of December. Besides this solicitude for the absent one, there were the mother's extra duties at home, during the winter months, in caring for the children and farm. On the 10th of January, 1756, the seventh child was born, the daughter Eunice, whom Putnam was destined not to see until the late spring or early summer

In April, 1756, we get a glimpse of Putnam at the place where the Indians had just made an important capture. Ebenezer Dyer, of New Haven, "fort-major and commissary," was making his way from Fort Edward to Saratoga, escorted by men from Putnam's company, when both he and members of the covering party were surprised and overcome by the savages. As soon as the news reached Putnam, he hastened to the relief of Dyer and the others, but the prisoners had been carried off in the meantime towards Canada, where they were kept several years.

The place where the capture occurred was identified by Putnam by some bills of the colony which he found torn and scattered about. The money, amounting to £21, had belonged to Dyer. Five years afterwards the Connecticut Assembly granted the petition of "Col. John Dyar, administrator on the estate of Ebenezer Dyar, late deceased," and reimbursed the "bills wholly destroyed by the Indians," with interest. It was in this connection that Putnam made the following statement in his own handwriting :

"this may cartify that the Day aftor Majir Dyar was taken captive by the Indens I was down on the whare [where] he was taken with a Party of men and thare saw amongst his Papors that ware torn to peses [pieces] I saw a considarabel quantyti of Prock [Proclamation] monny tor to peses and holy [wholly] mad[e] uesles [useless].

" ISRAEL PUTNAM.\*

" May 19, 1760."

On May 30, 1756, Putnam was relieved from service ; and in recognition of that which he and his principal Connecticut associate had accomplished the General Assembly, then in session at Hartford, passed the following :

"This Assembly grants to Capt. Israel Putnam the number of fifty Spanish mill'd dollars, and thirty such dollars unto Capt. Noah Grant, as gratuity for their extraordinary services and good conduct in ranging and scouting the winter past for the annoyance of the enemy near Crown Point and discovery of their motions."

Nearly a year had passed away since Putnam enlisted ; and glad he must have been to return home to see his wife and children, but his stay with them was brief, for he was to have part in another campaign which had already been planned by the Government.

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\* From the original document in the State Library, Hartford, Conn.





## CHAPTER V

### GUARDING THE FORTS

1756



THE New England men, according to the plans for the campaign of 1756, were to be employed only in a movement against Ticonderoga and Crown Point, while the soldiers whom William Shirley, the Commander-in-chief of all the colonial troops, meant to lead in person, were intended for an attack on the French forts at Lake Ontario. Putnam, who had been appointed by the General Assembly of Connecticut, at its March session, to be Captain of the Fourth Company in the First, or Lyman's, Regiment from that colony, arrived in early June at the encampment at Half Moon on the Hudson, where the provincials were mustering. After some delay, the troops, under the command of General John Winslow, moved forward from the encampment at Half Moon to Stillwater, and from there to Saratoga; thence to Upper Falls and on to Fort Edward. Here, nearly half of the army was ordered to remain under General Phineas Lyman of Connecticut, while Winslow himself advanced with the rest of the troops fourteen miles to Fort William Henry, where he expected to gather



all his force at an early date and embark on Lake George for the attack on the French strongholds. On the way from Half Moon, detachments had been left at some of the small posts below Fort Edward, but Putnam and his company appear to have been with Lyman.

It was now midsummer. Hostile bands of Frenchmen and Indians infested the region wherever the English were stationed. Putnam was one of the men who were especially employed to ward off the skulking enemy and, as one of the Connecticut officers expressed it, "to give those villains a dressing." It was, however, a difficult task to outwit the wily savages, who, eager for scalps, ventured near the English posts and practiced their most cunning stratagems. Again and again would the nimble invaders escape although watched for with the greatest vigilance.

For several successive nights the sentinels on duty at a particular outpost in the vicinity of Fort Edward disappeared one by one. Strict orders were given by the commander that any sentinel hearing a noise should call out three times, "Who goes there?" Then, if there were no response, he was to fire at the place from which the suspicious sound came. However, each morning the guard was missing, and it was evident that some beast or savage of unusual craftiness watched about the place. On account of the great danger of the post, since some of the bravest men in the garrison, who had offered themselves as guards, met the same mysterious fate, and because there were no more volunteers, it became necessary to draft men for picket duty. This was about to be done, when Putnam, who as a commissioned officer was not among those from whom a selection would be made, offered his own services in the emergency. He was accordingly



made sentinel for the night with the usual instructions. On reaching the post, Putnam took special precautions to examine his surroundings minutely, his experience as a ranger having already led him to suspect that the Indians were guilty of picking off the guards. It was not until midnight that anything unusual happened. Then his trained ear detected a crackling sound in the grass. Anyone less alert than Putnam might not have mistrusted that the noise came from anything more harmful than a belated animal feeding upon nuts, but he lost no time aiming his gun in that direction and calling out three times, "Who goes there?" After which, he fired immediately. He heard a groan, and, upon going to the spot, found that he had shot through the breast a large Indian, who was disguised in a bearskin. This dying savage proved to be the cause of the disappearance of the sentinels, for thereafter trouble of that kind ceased.

The uncertainty in regard to the French movements in this campaign of 1756 made it especially important to obtain prisoners who could give the much-wished-for information. On one occasion, when Putnam with five scouts had been sent out expressly for this purpose, an incident occurred which illustrates the difficulty he sometimes had in training his men because of their obtuseness to Indian wiles. Having reached the road leading to Ticonderoga, the scouting party hid in some tall grass to watch for the enemy. Notwithstanding the precautions which Putnam had insisted upon, the men were careless in showing themselves; and after being reprimanded they concealed themselves again only under protest. Soon an Indian passed by, and, at some distance behind him, a Frenchman followed. At the right moment, Putnam sprang out of the

hiding-place and started to run after them. He ordered his men to follow and expected them to do so as bravely as they had disregarded cautionary measures. At a distance of thirty rods, he overtook the Frenchman and seized him by the shoulders to take him prisoner. The Frenchman, however, resisted, for he saw no other assailant and relied upon help from the Indian. Then Putnam, finding that his men, unmindful of their Captain's danger, were most inopportunistically still hiding in the grass, released his hold, stepped back, and aimed his gun at his enemy's breast, but it missed fire. In this plight, he fled to rejoin his companions. The Frenchman, in turn, pursued him, but on seeing Putnam's associates rise from the place where they had lain concealed, he rushed off in another direction and escaped. So inefficient had the members of this party proved, that Putnam discharged them from the special service of scouting. He was not to be daunted, however, in his quest of a prisoner, and, setting out again soon afterwards, he succeeded in catching one.

The information about the enemy, which was obtained both from prisoners and by the reconnoissances of the scouts, showed that the plans of the English had been anticipated by the Marquis de Montcalm, who had succeeded Dieskau as commander of the French troops. He had hastened in June to defend Ticonderoga and had strongly garrisoned that important position. Having learned also of the danger to which his forts on Lake Ontario were exposed, he prepared to repel an attack in that direction. Meanwhile, the English made little progress in their military operations. Instead of carrying out their aggressive policy, they were occupied in protecting themselves from the ravages of swarms of

enemies who continued to pour out from that "hornet's nest," Ticonderoga. The services of men capable of fighting savages became invaluable to the English, who had few Indian allies in comparison with the French. The number of rangers had been increased since the previous year. They were more formally organised into companies under Robert Rogers as their chief. Bands of these men moved in different directions for the defence of the forts, and on one occasion at least during this campaign of 1756, Rogers and Putnam made an excursion together.

While some of the baggage and provisions were being transferred from Fort Edward to Fort William Henry and were at Half-Way Brook—so named from being midway between the two places—six hundred of the enemy suddenly appeared and, after killing the oxen and plundering the waggons, succeeded in carrying off the booty. The troops which had acted as the English escort dared to make but little resistance. As soon as the news of the loss reached the English garrison, Rogers and Putnam were ordered to take one hundred volunteers in boats, with two wall-pieces and two blunderbusses, and to proceed down Lake George to a certain point; there to leave the bateaux under a proper guard, and thence to cross by land, so as to harass, and, if practicable, intercept the retreating enemy at the Narrows.

So expeditiously did the rangers execute these orders that they reached the Narrows half an hour in advance of the enemy, who, unaware of the ambush, proceeded on their way down Wood Creek, their bateaux being loaded with the plunder. Suddenly the banks blazed forth a most withering fire. Many of the oarsmen were killed, several of the bateaux were sunk, and few, if

any, of the volunteers would have escaped, had not the wind swept the rest of the boats even more rapidly than usual through the Narrows into South Bay and borne them beyond gunshot. Some of the enemy now hastened with the news of the attack by the English to Ticonderoga. From that place a detachment was sent immediately to intercept the rangers on their way back to Fort Edward. Rogers and Putnam, knowing that this would be the probable attempt of the French, returned with their men as speedily as possible to their boats, twenty miles distant. They reached these that night, and having embarked at once arrived on the morrow at Sabbath-Day Point. There they found three hundred of the enemy on shore, preparing to attack them. This was the hostile force which had been sent in pursuit, but which, owing to the darkness, had passed by them unobserved some time in the night. Having now discovered the English approaching, the French and Indians, confident of easy victory on account of their own overwhelming numbers, entered their boats and advanced in battle line. The rangers waited until their assailants were within pistol-shot; then they discharged their wall-pieces and blunderbusses with such effect that, together with the fire from the small arms immediately afterwards, they made great havoc among the enemy. By alternate discharge of cannon and musketry, they kept up a continuous fire, which finally routed the French and Indians and made them retreat to Ticonderoga. Only one ranger was killed and two slightly wounded. The loss on the other side was very heavy. In one boat which contained twenty Indians, fifteen of them were killed, and many both of French and Indians were seen to fall overboard from the other boats. After the battle, Rogers and



Putnam refreshed their men on shore at Sabbath-Day Point and returned safely to camp.

In the latter part of the summer, the new commander-in-chief, who had succeeded Shirley, arrived at Fort Edward. Putnam now had the chance to know him, that "rough Scotch lord," the "hot and irascible" Loudoun, whose ignorance of the country and the army had caused additional delay in the military movements. August was well advanced when the startling news reached the English that a great disaster had befallen their forts at Oswego. Colonel Daniel Webb was on his way with reinforcements for those posts when the tidings met him : — Montcalm, leaving Lévis in command of three thousand men at Ticonderoga, had returned to Montreal, advanced from there to Lake Ontario, captured the garrisons, and razed the strongholds. The English had been anxious about the safety of those forts, but were astonished at the extent of the calamity. We get an idea of the feelings of the soldiers at Fort Edward — where Putnam first heard the news — in a letter written by one of the officers there : "Such a shocking affair has never found a place in English annals. The loss is beyond account ; but the dishonour done His Majesty's arms is infinitely greater."

The catastrophe seemed to paralyse the English plans for the remainder of the campaign. Winslow, who was still at Fort William Henry, received orders from Loudoun to give up the proposed attack on Ticonderoga and to remain where he was ; and Winslow was glad to stay, for, as he said with grim humour, "the sons of Belial are too strong for me." He began at once to intrench his camp as formidably as possible, and made an almost impenetrable abattis by having the



trees felled for the space of a mile between Lake George and the mountains. Meantime, Montcalm had returned to Ticonderoga and strongly garrisoned that position with a force of more than five thousand men. Rumours reached the English that he was about to move upon them, but Montcalm stayed at his own fortification, vigilantly guarding it.

Although the armies at the opposite ends of the lake did not stir from their strongholds, their own scouts were as active as ever. Among those of the English, Kennedy, Hazen, Peabody, Waterbury, Miller, and other provincial officers rendered valuable service, "though few," says Parkman, in speaking of them, "were so conspicuous as the blunt and sturdy Israel Putnam."

On October 16th, Winslow, in writing to Loudoun, mentioned the reconnoissance of a scouting party which had just returned to Fort William Henry. He said that it was the best yet made, and that the report of the leader, Putnam, could be implicitly trusted, for he was a man of strict truth. On the expedition to which Winslow referred, Putnam and six men had embarked in a whaleboat and proceeded down Lake George to a point on the east side, opposite the place where Hague, N. Y., now stands. Having concealed the boat and travelled north-easterly towards Lake Champlain, the scouts arrived within three miles of Ticonderoga. After reconnoitring it from a mountain, they went down nearer and pursued three Frenchmen, who escaped within the fort. Then Putnam and his men climbed the mountain a second time and moved westward along the ridge, making careful observations of all the enemy's outposts between Ticonderoga and Lake George.

In the intervals between his expeditions northward this autumn, Putnam was constantly employed with the other rangers in patrolling the woods about Fort Edward and Fort William Henry. A very interesting relic relating to Putnam is a powder-horn which was made this year and which he afterwards carried. It is about twenty inches long and holds one pound and a fourth of powder. The carving upon it is said to have been done by John Bush, who was an adept in such work. This is the inscription :

“CAPT. ISRAEL PUTNAM’S HORN MADE AT  
FORT WM. HENRY NOV’R 10TH A. D. 1756.”

Next upon the horn is a quaint plan of the route of the enemy from Albany to Lake George, showing the stations and forts between those points. Then follows this stanza :

“When bows and weighty spears were used in Fight  
Twere nervous limbs Declrd [declared] a man of might  
But now Gun-powder scorns such strength to own  
And Heroes not by Limbs but souls are shown.”

Last come the capitals, W A R, with some curious designs between the letters.\*

In November, the main body of the English troops retired for the winter ; the regulars went into quarters at Philadelphia, New York, and Boston, while the provincials marched for home. Some of the rangers, however, remained in active service. There is no

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\* This old powder-horn is now owned by Israel Waldo Putnam of Rockland, Washington County, Ohio, a great-great-grandson of Putnam. He has also a pair of pistols with holsters, a magnet, and a brass bullet-mould, all of which once belonged to Putnam.



ISRAEL PUTNAM'S POWDER HORN.



mention of Putnam in the account of the exploits during the winter. He had probably returned to Pomfret. If so, he stayed only a few weeks at home, for the French commander had plans which many of the provincials felt the necessity of forestalling by being on the field at the very opening of the next campaign. "When Monsieur Montcalm went off," reported one of the prisoners whom Putnam and his men had captured in the autumn of 1756, "he said he had done enough for this year, and would take Fort William Henry early in the spring."







## CHAPTER VI

### SAVAGE WARFARE

1757-1758



ORD LOUDOUN, who was still Commander-in chief, decided to use most of the English forces for the new campaign in a movement against Louisbourg, on Cape Breton Island. Partly because of the necessity of garrisoning Forts Edward and William Henry, in the absence of the main army on the proposed expedition, and partly as a concession to the New England colonists, who were greatly disappointed and alarmed that the attempt on Crown Point was not to be renewed in 1757, some of the provincials, as well as regulars, were ordered to remain on duty in the vicinity of the Hudson River and Lake George. Among these men was Putnam. The Connecticut company, of which he was Captain, was stationed at Fort Edward during most of the campaign. There is an interesting reference to Putnam, in a letter which Lieutenant Samuel Porter of Killingly, Connecticut, wrote in June of this year, 1757:

"MY DEAR & LOVING WIFE:

". . . I received your Letter Dated the 6th of May. I received it May 20 at Fort Edward from Capt. Putnam's hand.

. . . I have sent you six letters before this. The last I sent from Fort Edward Dated June the 9th. . . . I told you in that letter that Capt. Putnam had took out a number of his men and also a number of other company and made up a company of Rangers, & about 60 of our Company was left with Ensign Hayward & I, and so it remains yet. The next day after I wrote to you there was a number of our Connecticut men out at work with a guard but the Enemy came and fired upon them and Captivated four of them, one of them was David Campbell of Killingly, of our company. Capt. Putnam was then out for several days and when he came in he brought in a Frenchman which he took near the Narrows which gives an account of four prisoners being brought in, and describes Campbell very well for he had but one eye,—and when the enemy did this mischief General Lyman in his own person with a small party went after the enemy 8 or 10 miles and came upon them & fired & recovered several Mohawks. Yesterday some Mohawks Brought in a stout Frenchman which they said they took near Crown Point as I understand. But what more they have got from the Frenchman by examining him, I have not heard as yet.” \*

When Putnam returned to Fort Edward from the expedition, mentioned in the letter which has just been quoted, he found that Frye’s Massachusetts regiment had arrived there in his absence. Among these new men was one of his relatives, a tall and robust young private, who was to be associated with him on some important occasions, in both this war and the American Revolution. This was Rufus Putnam,† now nineteen

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\* From the original letter owned by Miss Ruth Carter Tracy, of Beverly, Mass., a great-great-granddaughter of Lieutenant Samuel Porter.

† Rufus Putnam, like Israel, was a lineal descendant of John Putnam, who emigrated to America about 1640, the line being as follows: Rufus,<sup>5</sup> Elisha,<sup>4</sup> Edward,<sup>3</sup> Thomas,<sup>2</sup> John.<sup>1</sup> Some writers mistake the relationship between Israel and Rufus and speak of them as own cousins, but they were more distant

years old, whose journal, kept during 1757 and in later years, is interesting and valuable as an original source of information \* in regard to Israel Putnam.

Within a few days, Israel was off on another expedition, for on July 1st Rufus made this entry :

“This day there came in two of Capt. Putnam’s men and brought in news that Capt. Putnam fired upon three or four hundred French and Indians on South Bay, but when they got to shore they were too hard for him and he wanted help. General Lyman with about 400 men went out for his relief.”

That evening, Israel Putnam himself returned to the fort and gave an account of the engagement.† He had

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kinsmen, for Joseph Putnam (Israel’s father) and Edward Putnam (Rufus’s grandfather) were half-brothers.

Rufus was born April 9, 1738, at Sutton, Mass. After his father’s death in 1745, he spent two years at the home of his maternal grandfather, Jonathan Fuller, at Danvers, Mass. In 1747, his mother married for her second husband Captain John Sadler, an innkeeper, of Upton, Mass., and Rufus went to live with them. The step-father had little sympathy with the boy’s ambition to study and denied him all school advantages. But Rufus devoted his spare time to text-books, which he bought with the money earned by serving guests at the tavern and by selling small game which he had shot. By his own unaided efforts, he made considerable progress in the way of education. At the age of sixteen, he was bound apprentice to one Daniel Matthews, of Brookfield, Mass., to learn the trade of millwright, and was continuing his studies in his leisure moments there, at the time of his enlistment.

\* The original manuscripts of Rufus Putnam are in the Library of Marietta College, Marietta, Ohio.

His journal, kept during four campaigns of the French and Indian War, has been edited, with notes and biographical sketch, by E. C. Dawes, and was published at Albany, in 1886.

† Humphreys makes an error in saying that this affair occurred “when General Abercrombie took command at Fort Edward,”

been ordered to take sixty men or more and go by land to South Bay, in Lake Champlain, in order to make discoveries and to intercept the enemy's parties. Having reached a ledge \* near the entrance of South Bay, he built a stone parapet thirty feet long. He screened this with young pine trees which he had cut and brought from a distance ; these he planted so skilfully that they looked like a natural growth. The bank in this place was well adapted for such a breastwork, for it rose from the water a jutting precipice ten or twelve feet in height. In the long march and the labour of building the fortification, fifteen of the men fell ill and had to be sent back. The supply of provisions became so scanty that Putnam was obliged to deviate from the rule he had made which forbade the firing of a gun, while on a scouting expedition, except at an enemy, and he himself shot for food a buck which had leaped into the lake. This was on the fourth day after the works were finished. That evening about ten o'clock,

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and in placing it after the surrender of Fort William Henry. Both Rufus Putnam and Colonel James Montresor, the British engineer, recorded it on July 1, 1757, in their journals.

\* Lossing in his *Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution*, vol. i., describes this ledge as "Putnam's Ledge" or "Put's Rock," which projects from the west shore of Lake Champlain at "the Elbow," which is half a mile from Whitehall Landing. He calls attention to the fact that "in the older histories and in geographies of the state of New York, the whole narrow part of Lake Champlain south of Ticonderoga was called respectively Wood Creek and South River," and that "these names for that portion of the lake have become obsolete." Some writers have been misled, therefore, by Humphreys's statement that Putnam "posted himself at Wood Creek, near its entrance into South Bay." Wood Creek does not flow into South Bay, but enters Lake Champlain at Whitehall.



one of the sentinels on duty at the margin of the bay, came back with the news that a fleet of bark canoes filled with men was approaching. Putnam immediately ordered every man, including the sentinels, whom he called in, to take post behind the breastwork. The part of the lake which the enemy soon entered is very narrow — only a few rods wide — and the shores on either side abrupt and rocky, the bank opposite the parapet being about twenty feet high. The night was clear and the full moon shone with unusual brightness. Everything was profoundly still. Putnam intended to divide the hostile force by letting part of the canoes pass before he began an attack. Some of the enemy paddled by, little suspicious of danger ; but unluckily one of the soldiers, hidden on the bank, accidentally struck his firelock on a stone. The quick ears of the commanding officer, who was in one of the foremost canoes, detected the sound, and he instantly uttered the Indian signal, "Owish." Putnam and his men heard him repeat it several times,—that savage watchword for the main body to advance, pronounced with a long labial hissing, the *O* being almost silent. The long line of canoes huddled together. It was evident that the little band under Putnam was greatly outnumbered, for the centre of the enemy's force was just in front of the parapet, and the fleet covered the lake above and below for a considerable distance. The officers seemed to be in grave consultation. Soon the canoes began to move as if orders had been given to retreat. Then Putnam, who had commanded his men not to fire until he gave the signal by doing so himself, discharged his gun. A deadly volley followed from the breastwork, and the well-concerted attack threw the enemy into great confusion. When they began to recover from



their consternation, they discovered from the infrequency of the firing—although there was no real intermission—that the number of their concealed assailants must be small, and they set about to land and surround them. Putnam had forestalled this movement by sending Lieutenant Robert Durkee and twelve men about thirty rods down the lake. They succeeded in repulsing the party which attempted to land there. Meanwhile, another small detachment under Lieutenant Parsons, which had been sent up the lake, prevented the enemy from getting on shore in that direction.

In the weird moonlight the tragic scene continued. Putnam and his men poured an incessant and destructive fire upon the enemy, who in return groaned, shrieked, yelled, and ineffectively shot toward the parapet. At dawn Putnam learned that some of the foe had landed below him and were hastening to cut off his retreat. Knowing that the force was superior to his own and that he could make but little resistance, since his soldiers had only a small supply of ammunition left, some of them having in fact shot their last round, he ordered his men to "swing their packs." They retired rapidly, in good order, and succeeded in advancing far enough up Wood Creek to avoid being surrounded, although they were obliged to leave behind them three of their number, who had been wounded in the long-continued action. Afterwards, when Putnam was in Canada, he learned that the French and Indians in the memorable moonlight encounter numbered five hundred, commanded by the famous partisan, Marin. No scouting party since the war began had suffered such a loss, for more than one-half of those who went out never came back.

When Putnam and his gallant little company had

been on the march along Wood Creek about an hour, after leaving the parapet, they were suddenly fired upon. "Rightly appreciating," as Humphreys expresses it, "the advantage often obtained by assuming a bold countenance on a critical occasion," Putnam, who was in front, "in a stentorophonick tone" ordered his followers to charge upon the assailants. The supposed hostile force proved to be but a band of provincials who were also out on a scouting trip. They fancied they were attacking the French, but fortunately the leader recognised Putnam's voice and cried out for all to stop firing, saying, "We are friends." Whereupon Putnam brusquely called to him, "Friends or enemies, you all deserve to be hanged for not killing more, when you had so fair a shot!" Characteristic as this was of Putnam's martial spirit, he must have been glad at heart that only one of his men was mortally wounded in the hasty attack by friendly scouts.

At a distance of twelve miles from Fort Edward, Putnam met the detachment which had been sent to his aid. This reinforcement under Lyman did not, however, turn back, but hastened on to relieve the wounded. Three days later, the soldiers at the fort learned the sad result of the search. "General Lyman came in," writes Rufus Putnam on July 4th, "with all the men that went out with him; but they found that two of those wounded men of Capt. Putnam's were carried off, and the third they found barbecued at a most doleful rate." Colonel Montresor, too, made a record of the return of Lyman, who "saw no enemy" but "found one of the remains of the people that was scalped and mangled of Putnam's Party." \*

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\* *Journal of Col. James Montresor in Collections of New York Historical Society, 1881.*

On Thursday, July 5th, the soldiers from the provincial force at Fort Edward, who "were to do Ranging duty and no other" during the campaign, were formally organised into six companies. "Out of our Regt.," says Rufus Putnam, "was Capt. West and Capt. Learned, out of Connecticut was Capt. Putnam and Capt. Sefford, and out of York forces Capt. Meginiss, out of Rhode Island Capt. Wall."

The next week Colonel Montresor wrote in his journal :

"Wednesday [July] 13th, Capt Putnam with a Scouting party of 100 men went out this morning and sent about 8 o'clock a man in to acquaint the General [Webb] that his Party had seen about 25 of the Enemy in a Swamp about 4 miles off, but he came in soon afterwards himself with an account that they had escaped."

A few days later, Putnam and his rangers were stationed on an island not far from Fort Edward. On Saturday morning, July 23rd,\* they were alarmed by the sound of firing. The direction from which it came showed that the enemy must be making an attack in the vicinity of the fort. Instantly calling to his men to follow him, Putnam plunged into the river, waded through it, and pressed on with all possible speed to assist the garrison with his own force.

One hundred and fifty men from the fort had been at work that morning, cutting timber in the adjoining woods. They were guarded by a band of British regulars, fifty or more in number, who were stationed at the head of a swamp, which was thickly covered with

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\* This date is given by both Rufus Putnam and Colonel Montresor in their journals in describing the attack. Humphreys makes a mistake in placing this incident after the surrender of Fort William Henry.

bushes.\* A strip of land, formed by the swamp on one side and a creek on the other, led to the fort, which lay westward about an hundred rods from the covering party. Suddenly, an arrow whizzed from the thickets and lodged in the limb of a tree, just above the head of one of the sentinels. He immediately gave the alarm, and it was soon discovered that a large number of Indians were lying in ambush in the vicinity. The workmen started on the retreat to the fort. Then the enemy, who had attempted to pick off the sentinels by arrows and surprise the whole party, rushed from the bushy morass, into which they had stealthily crept during the night, and began a fierce assault with guns and tomahawks and their other weapons. This hostile force, which the Marquis de Montcalm had sent under the command of Marin, consisted of about two hundred men, mostly Indians. It was now "about eight o'clock in the morning," according to Rufus Putnam, and "they fired on our workmen within 80 Rods of the Fort." The guard of regulars poured a well-timed volley on the enemy and held them in check for a little while.

On his way to the scene of action, Israel Putnam passed the fort. The outposts had been called in and the gate shut, for the commander there expected that the main body of the enemy would make a general assault upon the fortifications. When Putnam, undaunted by the fact that all who remained outside would be left to their fate, was hurrying by with his

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\* Humphreys says that Captain Little was in command of the covering party of British regulars and also speaks of him as Israel Putnam's "friend," but he does not mention Captain Learned who is spoken of in Rufus Putnam's account of the events of the same day.



followers to the assistance of the soldiers who had been attacked, General Lyman,\* unwilling that more lives should be sacrificed, mounted the parapet, and ordered him to proceed no farther. But Putnam stopped only to make a brief apology and marched on. He soon arrived at the place where the little band of regulars, with the assistance of a few provincials, were holding their ground against their savage assailants. Some of the workmen had succeed in reaching the fort, and the rest of them were defending themselves as best they could.

After the fighting had lasted about an hour, Israel Putnam decided to make a charge with his men into the swamp, where the enemy had taken advantage of the bushes to conceal themselves when firing. With a sudden burst of threatening shouts and yells the whole party dashed forward. So unexpected was the onset that the Indians recoiled, and then fled in every direction. Putnam and his men followed them; and although some of the savages tried to rally and there was, according to Niles,† “a smart skirmish firing on both

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\* Montresor, in speaking of the soldiers who advanced to the aid of those who were attacked, says, “Genl. Lyman with another body went also.” None of the other accounts, however, contain a similar statement. If Lyman did join in the fight, he left the fort after Putnam passed by, for, besides the story which Humphreys tells of Lyman ordering Putnam not to go, we have the record of Rufus Putnam that Captain Learned’s company was the first on the ground, and Captain Putnam and his company arrived next.

† Rev. Samuel Niles, sometimes called Father Niles (born 1674, died 1762), who had personal knowledge of many of the events which he describes in his “Summary Historical Narrative of the Wars in New England with the French and Indians.” See *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Fourth Series, vol. v., p. 439.



sides about fifteen minutes," all the Indians were finally forced to retreat. "Our men," says Niles, "behaved gallantly, officers and soldiers; they pursued the enemy so warmly, that they recovered several guns and some packs." He gives us some idea of the sad circumstances relating to those who had fallen while bravely resisting the foe. "Captain Waldo drew six arrows out of the body of one of his men that was killed." The dead, all of them scalped, were eleven in number, and two of the several soldiers who were wounded died the following night. One man was carried away prisoner. It was evident from the "track of blood" that the enemy's loss was great, but no bodies were found, for, as Niles tells us, "it is the constant custom of the Indians to hazard their lives to a great degree rather than leave their dead behind them."

Putnam's invaluable service in the morning seems to have redeemed whatever disregard of orders he showed by taking part in the fight, for, in the afternoon of the same day, he was put in command of two hundred and fifty men and sent on the important duty of pursuing the enemy. His young relative, Rufus, accompanied him and gives the following account :

"We marched on the Indian trail until sunset; Captain Putnam then ordered three of us to follow the trail a mile or more farther and there lie close till it was quite dark, and to observe if any came back, 'for,' said he, 'if they do not embark in their boats to-night, they will send a party back to see if they are pursued.' We went according to orders, but made no discovery. And here I would remark, that Captain Putnam's precaution struck my mind very forcibly as a maxim always to be observed, whether you are pursuing or pursued by an enemy, especially in the woods. It was the first idea of generalship that I remember to have treasured up."

On the next day, July 24th, Israel Putnam and his rangers returned from the pursuit, "having discovered an encampment of about 500 or 600 men near Fort Ann."

The absence of Lord Loudoun, with the best of the English troops on the expedition against Louisbourg, had given the French just the opportunity they wished. Montcalm proposed to seize Fort William Henry, to advance against Fort Edward, and devastate the country as far as Albany itself. He had been active in gathering a great body of Indians, from as far east as Acadia and west as Lake Superior, and already nearly two thousand savages had responded to his call. These allies increased his army to eight thousand men.

On July 25th, General Webb, who was in chief command of the English garrisons, left Fort Edward for Lake George, under the escort of Capt. Israel Putnam and two hundred men. When the party reached Fort William Henry, they found that the rangers had failed in several attempts to reconnoitre in the night. Putnam begged to go down Lake George in the daytime, land at Northwest Bay with only five men, send back the rest of the party with the boats so as to avoid being detected, and make the best discoveries he could by land of the enemy's position, force, and probable movements. General Webb thought the plan too hazardous, but he finally allowed him to undertake it with eighteen volunteers in three whale-boats.

Before Putnam reached Northwest Bay, he discovered men on an island. He decided to carry back the news immediately, but, lest he should alarm the enemy, he took the precaution to leave two boats behind, with orders for the men in them to fish on the lake as if they had come solely for that purpose. When General

Webb saw the one boat hurriedly returning, he supposed that the others had been captured. He sent a skiff to meet it, with instructions for Putnam alone to come on shore, and after learning from him that there were signs of a hostile force in the vicinity, he reluctantly granted his urgent request to go back to obtain more information and to fetch the other boats. Having rejoined his men where he had left them, Putnam advanced for further discovery, and saw by the aid of a telescope the enemy approaching him on the lake. His whale-boats were hotly pursued and barely escaped being surrounded by the foremost canoes. On his return to General Webb again, Putnam reported that the enemy had doubtless gathered their forces for an attack on Fort William Henry. The General agreed with him in this supposition, ordered him to keep the matter secret, and to make ready to accompany him back to Fort Edward without delay. Putnam remonstrated. "I hope," he said to Webb, in a conversation which Humphreys has recorded, "your Excellency does not intend to neglect so fair an opportunity of giving battle, should the enemy presume to land?" "What do you think we should do here?" was the curt reply of the General, who did not dare to face the hostile force.

On Friday, July 29th, Webb, under escort of the company which Putnam commanded, left Fort William Henry at noon, and arrived at Fort Edward that evening at seven o'clock. He sent a letter at once to the Governor of New York, in which he told him that the French were certainly coming, and urged him to forward the militia. "I am determined," Webb wrote at this time, in referring to the necessity of reinforcing the garrison of twelve hundred men under Colonel

Monro, "to march to Fort William Henry with the whole army under my command as soon as I shall hear of the farther approach of the enemy."

Three days passed away and then on Tuesday, August 2nd, General Webb sent to the lake a detachment of one thousand men. The reinforcement carried valuable baggage and camp equipage, but this was against the advice of Israel Putnam, who seems to have had a strong premonition of the disaster which was to befall Fort William Henry. Eager and solicitous as he had been to aid in defending that fort after he had discovered the enemy in the vicinity, he must have been disappointed, after escorting General Webb back to Fort Edward, to be still retained at the latter place when the detachment was forwarded. At Fort Edward remained also Colonel Montresor and Rufus Putnam, and from their journals we learn what Israel Putnam himself must have heard and seen, while the fort, fourteen miles away, was being besieged.

"We were alarmed at 5 o'clock in the morning," records Montresor, on Wednesday, August 3rd, "with the report of Cannon from Fort W<sup>m</sup> Henry, two or three shot sometimes within a minute or two of one another and sometimes above a quarter of an hour & more till 10 o'clk. The firing increased in the afternoon till 6 o'clock. Two of the Rangers brought in a French Deserter."

This Frenchman told of the rapidity with which the besiegers had approached and set to work for the investment of the fort at the lake. While the siege of Fort William Henry was in progress, the soldiers at Fort Edward began to strengthen their own defences. Israel Putnam shared in these preparations for repelling the enemy if they advanced from the lake. A letter



arrived, on Thursday, from Colonel Monro for General Webb, stating "that the French General sent to him to surrender the Fort, but he answered he would defend it to the last." The "cannon firing," which the soldiers at Fort Edward heard on Friday, "began early but distant from one another." It was heavier and less intermittent in the afternoon, but ceased at night. During that day another message was received from Colonel Monro, saying that although his "men were in good spirits and of good courage," he must be reinforced. Saturday, the fourth day of the siege, began, with "very great firing from 5 o'clock in the morning until 8," and now it was "supposed the French had erected their Batteries in the night." The force at Fort Edward was increased that day by the arrival of Sir William Johnson with Indians and militia from Albany. General Webb, who, notwithstanding the repeated expresses from Colonel Monro, had done nothing for his relief, allowed General Johnson to start for the lake with a reinforcement which included a company of rangers under Israel Putnam; but before the detachment had marched three miles the order was countermanded, and the men returned. It appears that Putnam, when a prisoner in Canada the next year, was told by Montcalm himself that the movement of these troops towards the lake was reported in the French camp by an Indian scout, who, in reply to a question regarding the probable number of men coming, said, "If you can count the leaves on the trees you can count them." The besiegers suspended operations and thought seriously of re-embarking, but another scout arrived with the news that the English detachment had turned back.

By Monday, August 8th, Colonel Monro and his



men were in a deplorable condition. Their loss, in killed and wounded, now numbered more than three hundred ; many of the soldiers were ill of smallpox ; the rest of the force could make but feeble defence against the approaches of the enemy.

“Last night,” writes Rufus Putnam, at Fort Edward on Tuesday morning. “we saw the signals that were flung up for signals of distress at Fort William Henry. The Post also said that they had split most of their Cannon, and that they must be obliged to give up the Fort, except they had relief from this Fort. This express arrived in about ten o’clock [in the morning] and before he came in, the Cannon ceased but we know not the meaning of it.”

The meaning was that Colonel Monro had surrendered.

But shortly after the capitulation had been duly signed at Lake George, a dreadful tragedy began there. The English, being allowed their private effects and promising not to serve against the French for eighteen months, were to march out of their works with the honours of war and be escorted to Fort Edward by a detachment of Montcalm’s force. No sooner, however, had the garrison evacuated the fort and joined the rest of the prisoners at the intrenched camp, which was included in the surrender, than the Indian allies of the victors got at the English liquor and quickly felt no restraint upon their barbarous passions. Some of Monro’s men, who escaped from the massacre, succeeded in reaching Fort Edward.

There was now great excitement at Fort Edward. The savages, for aught the soldiers there knew, might be already approaching. General Webb himself was as frightened as any of his men, and, giving credence to the exaggerated rumours which spread through the

camp, was on the verge of retreating with the garrison. Brave Israel Putnam, ready for service, was sent out with his rangers to scout, and discovered that there was no immediate danger of an attack by the Indians, for they had decamped in a body and gone northward, taking their plunder and prisoners with them. Montcalm was making no preparations to march with the rest of his force against Fort Edward, but had set his soldiers to work demolishing the fort at the lake. They were tearing down the barracks, throwing the great timbers of the rampart into a heap, and tossing the bodies of the English dead onto the mass, for a huge pyre.

Until August 16th, the French were occupied in devastating at Lake George, and then they re-embarked for Montreal. When the terror at the possibility of being besieged had been somewhat allayed at Fort Edward, cannon were fired at intervals to guide the survivors of the massacre, who were still wandering in the woods. From day to day they came dropping in, and Israel Putnam, after his return from the scouting expedition, must have been a witness of the pitiable condition of these men who were half dead of fright and famine. He must have heard their tales of horror and listened also to the tragic experiences of many of his comrades, whom the French recovered from the Indians and sent with all the other prisoners to Fort Edward.

After the departure of the French, Israel Putnam and his rangers were the first persons upon the scene of the massacre. Amid the smouldering ruins of the fort was the ghastly sight of half-consumed corpses; and in every direction were shocking evidences of barbarity. We can understand the feelings of the generous and warm-hearted soldier who looked upon

the "horrid scene of blood and slaughter," where the dead victims—men, women, and children, all fiendishly mutilated — "afforded a spectacle too horrible for description."

On August 21st, just after he returned from the lake to Fort Edward, "Captain Putnam went for eleven days scouting." He came in on the 30th, reporting that he had been in the vicinity of Ticonderoga.

During the autumn, Putnam was associated with Rogers in the ranging service.

"In one of these parties," says the latter, "my Lord Howe did us the honour to accompany us, being fond, as he expressed himself, to learn our method of marching, ambushing, retreating, &c., and upon our return expressed his good opinion of us very generously."

It was on this expedition that there began a friendship between the young nobleman and Putnam which is recorded in the next campaign.

On November 7th, Lord Loudoun, who had recently returned from his bootless Louisbourg expedition, arrived at Fort Edward. The provincial soldiers, who had been retained to complete the works there, were soon ordered to return home. Israel Putnam remained on duty for the winter. The rangers, with whom he continued to serve, "were encamped and quartered in huts" on an island in the Hudson River, near the garrison left at Fort Edward. This story of his heroic and successful exertions in saving Fort Edward from fire, at the imminent risk of his own life, is told by Humphreys :

"In the winter of 1757, when Colonel Haviland was Commandant at Fort Edward, the barracks adjoining to the north-west bastion took fire. They extended within twelve feet of the

magazine, which contained three hundred barrels of powder. On its first discovery, the fire raged with great violence. The Commandant endeavoured, in vain, by discharging some pieces of heavy artillery against the supporters of this flight of barracks, to level them with the ground. Putnam arrived from the island, where he was stationed, at the moment when the blaze approached that end which was contiguous to the magazine. Instantly, a vigorous attempt was made to extinguish the conflagration. A way was opened by a postern gate to the river, and the soldiers were employed in bringing water ; which he, having mounted on a ladder to the eaves of the building, received and threw upon the flames. It continued, notwithstanding their utmost efforts, to gain upon them. He stood, enveloped in smoke, so near the sheet of fire, that a pair of thick blanket mittens were burnt entirely from his hands ; he was supplied with another pair, dipt in water. Colonel Haviland, fearing that he would perish in the flames, called to him to come down. But he entreated that he might be suffered to remain, since destruction must inevitably ensue if their exertions should be remitted. The gallant Commandant, not less astonished than charmed at the boldness of his conduct, forbade any more effects to be carried out of the fort, animated the men to redoubled diligence, and exclaimed, 'if we must be blown up, we will all go together.' At last, when the barracks were seen to be tumbling, Putnam descended, placed himself at the interval, and continued from an incessant rotation of replenished buckets to pour water upon the magazine. The outside planks were already consumed by the proximity of the fire, and, as only one thickness of timber intervened, the trepidation now became general and extreme. Putnam, still undaunted, covered with a cloud of cinders, and scorched with the intensity of the heat, maintained his position until the fire subsided, and the danger was wholly over. He had contended for one hour and a half with that terrible element. His legs, his thighs, his arms, and his face were blistered ; and when he pulled off his second pair of mittens, the skin from his hands and fingers followed them. It was a month before he recovered. The Commandant, to whom his merits had before endeared him, could not stifle the emotion of gratitude, due to the man who had been so instrumental in preserving the magazine, the fort, and the garrison."



Towards the end of the winter, Putnam, in condition for further service, was sent on an expedition northward.

"On Captain Putnam's return," writes Rogers in his journal, "we were informed he had ventured within eight miles of the French fort at Ticonderoga, and that a party he had sent to make discoveries had reported to him, that there were near 600 Indians not far from the enemy's quarters."

In the spring of 1758, Putnam made a journey to Connecticut to see his family, and to take command of the soldiers, recently enlisted in his own colony, over whom he had been appointed for the coming campaign.







## CHAPTER VII

### THE ATTACK ON TICONDEROGA

1758



PUTNAM had been promoted to the rank of Major by the General Assembly, which met at New Haven in March, 1758. At this session, Connecticut voted to furnish five thousand men for the new campaign, a force three times larger than that which the colony had sent into the field in the spring of 1757. The three expeditions for the coming campaign were to be against the same French strongholds as in the previous year. Louisbourg was to be attacked by Major-General Jeffrey Amherst, and Fort Duquesne by Brigadier-General John Forbes. General James Abercrombie, the Commander-in-chief of all the forces, was to lead a combined British and provincial army against Crown Point. It was in this last expedition, in which most of the Connecticut men were employed, that Putnam had a part.

There were fewer delays than usual by the colonies in forwarding their troops, and during May the provincials, in large numbers, joined the regulars in the vicinity of Albany. Detachments, in which were some of the Connecticut soldiers, were retained to garrison

Stillwater, Saratoga, Fort Miller, and Fort Edward, but the men to whom Israel Putnam was assigned were among those who were ordered to march with all haste to Lake George. Soon on the site of the notable events of the war, the defeat of Dieskau and the loss of Fort William Henry, were assembled more than nine thousand provincials. Near the provincial camp were pitched the tent of six thousand regulars. The presence of Brigadier-General Lord Howe rather than that of the chief commander, Abercrombie, created confidence and enthusiasm throughout the whole army. Lord Howe, who was now in his thirty-fourth year, was a natural leader. "The army felt him, from general to drummer-boy." He won the respect and affection of all by his modesty and common sense, and by the way in which he adapted himself to the circumstances of the frontier warfare. He improved every opportunity to show his special interest in the rangers. His intimacy with some of the provincial officers did much toward breaking down the strained relations which had existed between many of the British regulars and provincial soldiers. We can easily understand his warm appreciation of the frank, generous, intrepid Israel Putnam, and how his acquaintance with him ripened into a strong friendship.

By the last week in June all the troops had arrived at Lake George. Having declared the capitulation of Fort William Henry "null and void," because the enemy had broken the terms "by murdering, pillaging, and captivating" the English, General Abercrombie ordered preparations to be made at once for the expedition against Ticonderoga. By seven o'clock on the morning of July 5th, the army of more than fifteen thousand men had embarked in about nine

hundred bateaux and a hundred and thirty-five whale-boats; a large number of rafts, or heavy flatboats, carried the artillery. In the great armament, Israel Putnam and many of the soldiers must have shared the feelings of one of their number who soon afterwards wrote: "I never beheld so delightful a prospect." It was a martial spectacle, made brilliant indeed by the banners and the music, the uniforms, the plaids of the Highlanders, the glittering weapons, the flashing oars, the sparkling waters, the background of forests and mountains, and all the picturesque beauty of the scene on the fair summer day. Before ten o'clock, the fleet had passed over the wider part of the lake and had entered the Narrows. There the boats were formed into files and made a line six miles long, as they advanced between the mountains which rose, on either hand, from the water's edge. At five in the evening, all the troops reached Sabbath-Day Point, twenty-five miles down the lake. They waited here until ten o'clock.

During the remainder of the night, the great flotilla continued on its journey. At dawn, in passing the bare steeps of Rogers Rock, it was watched by a French advance party under Langy and Trepezec. When the English drew near the northern end of the lake on this morning of July 6th, a party including Lord Howe, Rogers, Putnam, and other officers, went in whale-boats to reconnoitre the landing, and, having discovered a detachment of the enemy on the shore, drove them off without difficulty. By noon the whole army had landed on the west side.

The bridge at the outlet having been burned by the French, Abercrombie decided to advance across the plain to Trout Brook, and, by passing round the western

bank of the river of the outlet, approach the enemy's fort. He accordingly ordered Rogers and a party of rangers, as well as the Connecticut regiments of Fitch and Lyman, to lead the way, while he followed with the main army, which was formed in four columns, the regulars being in the centre and the provincials on the flanks. Israel Putnam, with two hundred rangers, accompanied Lord Howe, who was at the head of the principal column.

The army advanced with the greatest difficulty, and soon was "in the strange situation" of being lost in the forest, for, to quote from Abercrombie himself, "the woods being very thick, impassable with any regularity to such a body of men, and the guides unskilful, the troops were bewildered, and the columns broke, falling in one upon another." \* Suddenly, while the soldiers, who had now proceeded about two miles from the landing-place, were struggling in the maze of trees and thick undergrowth, a sharp challenge in French, "*Qui vive ?*" came from the thickets in front of some of the troops. "*Francais!*" replied the English, but the enemy were not deceived and began firing out of the bushes. This hostile force which the army had encountered was none other than the French advance party under Langy and Trepezec, about three hundred and fifty men in all, who, in retreating from Rogers Rock towards Ticonderoga, had also become confused and for hours had been wandering in the forest. They had now fallen in between the main body of the English and the detachment consisting of Rogers's rangers and the two Connecticut regiments.

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\* Letter of Abercrombie to Pitt, in *Documents Relating to the Colonial History of New York*, vol. x., p. 726.



The attack began just in front of the column which Lord Howe commanded, and which was a little in advance of the three others.

Humphreys says that the following conversation took place:

“ ‘Putnam,’ said Lord Howe, ‘what means that firing?’ ‘I know not, but, with your Lordship’s leave, will see,’ replied the former. ‘I will accompany you,’ rejoined the gallant young nobleman. In vain did Major Putnam attempt to dissuade him by saying—‘My Lord, if I am killed the loss of my life will be of little consequence, but the preservation of yours is of infinite importance to this army.’ The only answer was, ‘Putnam, your life is as dear to you as mine is to me ; I am determined to go.’ ”

With a detachment from the main body, Howe and Putnam made a rapid movement forward and a hot skirmish followed.

The English troops had been thrown into extreme confusion by the suddenness of the attack, but the self-possession and bravery of the rangers prevented a panic. Although the beloved Lord Howe was the first man that fell in the skirmish, the band of woodland warriors under Putnam maintained their ground, until by the approach of Rogers and the soldiers with him, the enemy were caught between two fires. The French fought desperately, but Putnam and his men “cut their way obliquely through the enemy’s ranks,” and, being reinforced by Captain Dalzell with twenty men, together with a few other troops, made a successful charge. Only about fifty of the French escaped ; nearly one hundred and fifty of them were taken prisoners, and the rest were killed in the fight or were drowned in trying to swim through the rapids.

The victory was marred, however, by the serious blunder of some of the English soldiers who were op-



posite Putnam. Having mistaken his party for the enemy, they opened a fierce fire when he and his men were advancing, over the dead bodies, towards them, to join the left wing of the army. A sergeant and several privates with Putnam were killed before he succeeded in making the troops aware of their tragic error, and this he was able to do only by exposing himself to the greatest peril in running in face of the musketry into their ranks.

Few of the English had been slain in the encounter with the French, but the death of Lord Howe was a disaster indeed. "A brave and bold commander," wrote Rufus Putnam in his journal, "that worthy man, my Lord Howe, who is lamented by us all and whose death calls for our revenge." Israel Putnam shared deeply in the grief expressed in this and many other tributes to the memory of his personal friend, a hero so beloved.

During the remainder of the day and also all the following night, the army was kept under arms in the forest. Putnam was employed until dark in caring for the wounded enemy. He helped in picking them up, and gathering them in one place; he gave them such food and drink as he could secure, and furnished each of them with a blanket. As an illustration of Putnam's "tender feelings" for the "unfortunate foe," Humphreys says that he put three blankets under a French sergeant who was badly wounded through the body, and placed him in as comfortable a posture as possible by the side of a tree. The suffering man, in appreciation of this act of forethought, could only gratefully press the hand of his benefactor. Putnam assured the Frenchman that he would be carried to the camp as soon as possible, and would receive the same

care as if he were his brother. In contrast to the humanity of Putnam, Humphreys mentions the brutality of Rogers, who was sent the next morning in search of those of the wounded enemy who had not yet been picked up in the forest. He "dispatched to the world of spirits" all of those who were unable to help themselves, and thus saved himself the trouble of caring for them. Such conduct was not inconsistent with the character of Rogers. "As a man," Parkman has truly said of him, "his deserts were small ; as a bush-fighter he was beyond reproach."

After the night spent in the forest, the army was marched back on the morning of the 7th to the landing-place. From there, about eleven o'clock in the forenoon, Lieutenant-Colonel Bradstreet advanced with a detachment of regulars, provincials, and rangers, and on reaching the saw-mill at the Falls, within two miles of Ticonderoga, rebuilt the bridges which had been destroyed by the retiring enemy. "I accordingly marched thither with the troops," writes Abercrombie, "and we took up our quarters there that night." The soldiers had regained their confidence, and imagined themselves victors in the morrow's fight.

The French, however, were strongly fortifying themselves at Ticonderoga. Their fort there stood near the end of the peninsula, which is bounded on the east by Lake Champlain, and on the south and south-west by the outlet of Lake George. In order to protect the only approach by land, Montcalm, on the morning of July 7th, had set his men to work constructing a formidable breastwork on the high ground about a half-mile west of the fort. Thousands of trees were felled, and the trunks piled one upon another to form a massive wall, which began near the wet meadows on the

north and followed the course of the ridge across the plateau to the low ground bordering the outlet. From these zigzag works, flank-fires of musketry and grape could sweep the whole front. Beyond the wall, to the distance of a musket-shot, the forest was laid flat and the trees, being left where they had been hewn down, formed one vast abattis. Immediately in front of the breastwork the ground was spread with heavy branches, interwoven and projecting outwards with sharpened points. This prodigious amount of work had been accomplished in one day. After the arrival of the English at the saw-mill, Montcalm was strengthening his defences still further and making his final arrangements for resisting the threatening assault. His total force, including a few hundred men brought by Lévis on the evening of the 7th, was only thirty-six hundred.

Meanwhile, in the English camp, Abercrombie had been deceived by his prisoners into believing that the French numbered six thousand men and were hourly expecting a large reinforcement. He was eager to forestall the enemy's succour by making an attack at once, although his cannon had not arrived. Clerk, the chief engineer, was sent in the early morning of the 8th to reconnoitre the French lines, and returned with "favourable reports," as the official account states, "of the practicability of carrying these works if attacked before they were finished." Then Abercrombie, heedless of the warning of Putnam and other officers, who were convinced by their own observations as well as woodland experience that the formidable obstructions had already been completed,—then Abercrombie, in spite of these protests, resolved to storm the French breastworks that very day and gave his orders accordingly.

Soon after noonday, the English van, consisting of

the rangers, the light infantry, and Bradstreet's armed boatmen, issued from the forest into the open space and began a scattering fire. They were followed by some of the provincial troops, who extended from left to right, and joined in the preliminary discharges. Then the regulars, in columns and with fixed bayonets, advanced through the openings between the provincial regiments and took the lead ; but as they pressed forward to the assault, their ranks were broken by the abattis. In the confusion, while the soldiers struggled to force their way over the fallen trees and projecting limbs, incessant and murderous fire blazed from the woods in front. Officers and men were mowed down by hundreds ; the rest returned the fire as best they could, and bravely attempted to push close to the breastwork. The maze of obstructions and the terrific cross-fires finally compelled the assailants to fall back, and amid the grape-shot and musket-balls which tore the air, they retreated from the open space.

When Abercrombie, who had remained behind at the saw-mill, a mile and a half away, learned of the repulse, he sent orders for a second assault. Another carnage followed, which Parkman has described in graphic language :

"The scene was frightful ; masses of infuriated men who could not go forward, and would not go back ; straining for an enemy they could not reach, and firing on an enemy they could not see ; caught in the entanglement of fallen trees ; tripped by briars, stumbling over logs, tearing through boughs ; shouting, yelling, cursing, and pelted all the while with bullets that killed them by scores, stretched them on the ground, or hung them on jagged branches in strange attitudes of death. The provincials supported the regulars with spirit, and some of them forced their way to the foot of the wooden wall." \*

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\* *Montcalm and Wolfe.*



The courage of the provincial soldiers, to which Parkman refers, was owing in part to the special service rendered by Putnam, who assisted in bringing the provincial troops successively into action and rallying the men in the midst of the fearful conflict. Many of them were animated with fresh daring by his own intrepidity and pressed forward to renewed exertions.

The English made six consecutive assaults between one and seven o'clock. Early in the fight, twenty bateaux loaded with soldiers were sent by Abercrombie down the outlet of Lake George towards the fort, but were driven back by the cannon. A column, consisting of English grenadiers and the Highlanders, attacked the enemy's right, and "continued charging for three hours without retreating or breaking." About five o'clock, two columns joined in an assault on a point between the French centre and right, and some of the soldiers succeeded in hewing their way to the foot of the breastwork. But it was all in vain. At length, when nearly two thousand of their number were lying dead or wounded before the lines, the English were forced to retire. An hour and a half longer Israel Putnam remained before the lines, for, until half-past seven, the retreat of the main body of troops was covered by the rangers, who kept up a continuous fire from the edge of the forest, and from behind the stumps and bushes. In the dusk of the evening, all the assailants withdrew, and only the dead and wounded were left. During the night, the English made their way back to the landing-place. The next morning, Abercrombie, who had decided to make no further attempt to capture the French stronghold, ordered all his men to embark for the place where Fort William Henry



had once stood. In "great confusion and sorrow" they set out on July 9th for the head of the lake, and arrived there the same day at sunset. Thus ended a most unfortunate expedition.

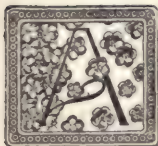




## CHAPTER VIII

### A PRISONER

1758



**A**FTER the return of the army from the disastrous attempt on Ticonderoga, Israel Putnam was employed again in the ranging service. His exploit in escaping down the rapids of the Hudson, in the vicinity of Fort Miller,

which stood on the western bank of the Hudson River, in what is now the town of Northumberland, Saratoga County, N. Y., occurred at this period. He chanced one day to be on the eastern bank of the river, with five companions and a bateau, when he was warned by some of his party, who were on the opposite side, that a large band of Indians was approaching behind him. Knowing that it would be fatal to try either to make a stand against overwhelming numbers, or to cross the river under fire of the enemy, Putnam bethought himself of going down the rapids, hazardous as such an attempt seemed. There was no time to lose. One of his men, being a little distance away, unfortunately had to be left behind, and was soon afterwards killed by the savages. Putnam and the other men had barely pushed off in their boats, when they were fired upon.

The current, which bore them beyond musket-shot, soon became itself extremely dangerous, for it swept the bateau with great rapidity among jutting rocks and into whirling eddies. The self-possession and skill of Putnam saved the boat from being upset or dashed to pieces. From his position at the helm, he twice turned it fairly round in order to avoid the rocks, and steered it through the mad rush of waters until, after a perilous course of a quarter of a mile, it cleared the roaring and foaming rapids and glided out upon the smooth current below. The Indians, who had been watching the boat with great astonishment, were filled with superstitious reverence for the brave leader who they thought must be under the special protection of the Great Spirit in escaping the bullets, and in taking his companions safely down the rapids that had never before been passed.

The rangers were kept very active in reconnoitring in every direction, for General Abercrombie was continually in fear of a descent upon him by Montcalm. The French commander, however, made no forward movement from Ticonderoga with his whole army, but sent out frequent war parties to watch the English. A detachment, which was commanded by La Corne, left the French camp in the latter part of July, and, on the 27th of the month, surprised and plundered a large waggon train on the Fort Edward road. As soon as the news of the disaster reached Abercrombie, he ordered Rogers, with a force of provincials, light infantry, and rangers, to hasten down Lake George in boats, cross the mountains to the narrow part of Lake Champlain, and intercept the plunderers. Israel Putnam was one of these pursuers. They numbered seven hundred men in all, and set out at two o'clock in the morning

with all possible speed; but they were too late. "The enemy had got their canoes and gone off," says Captain Holmes, a Connecticut officer, "though not so far but that our men heard their shouting, but could not come up to them."

Abercrombie, having learned that other French parties were hovering about Fort Edward, sent a special messenger to Rogers to cut them off. "I was met," writes the latter, who, on July 31st, was returning to camp after the enemy under La Corne had escaped him, "by an express from the General with orders to march with seven hundred men to South and East Bay and return by way of Fort Edward." Rogers accordingly turned back and made his way to South Bay. There he separated his party into two equal divisions, one of which was left under the command of Putnam at South Bay, while he himself, with the other, took up a position twelve miles distant. A few days later, finding that their stations were discovered by the enemy's scouts, the two leaders reunited their forces, and started for Fort Edward. The men marched through the forest in three divisions by files; Rogers commanded the right, Dalzell the centre, and Putnam the left. On August 7th, the party reached the place where Whitehall now stands, and after advancing ten miles farther south, encamped for the coming night on the bank of the Clear River, a fork of Wood Creek, before its junction with East Creek, and within a mile of Fort Anne.

On the next morning, Rogers, who was usually extremely careful to avoid all possibility of alarming the enemy, so far forgot himself, after seeing no signs of a hostile force in the vicinity, that he and Lieutenant Irwin, of the light infantry, indulged in firing at a mark on a wager. "Nothing," says Humphreys,

“could have been more repugnant to the military principles of Putnam than such conduct, or reprobated by him in more pointed terms.” The incautious amusement was dearly bought, for four hundred and fifty French and Indians were not far away. They were commanded by Montcalm’s leading partisan, Marin. Immediately after the sound reached their ears, the enemy reconnoitred and arranged themselves in ambush. The trees for nearly a mile from the abandoned fort had formerly been hewn down and burned, and the open tract, being covered with a dense growth of thickets, was traversed only by a narrow Indian path. Across this path, Marin’s men lay in a semicircle, prepared to surprise the English party as it approached in single file.

About seven o’clock, on this morning of August 8th, after the wager had been decided and while the bushes were still wet with the heavy dew of the night, the unsuspecting English decamped.

“We began our march,” Rogers writes, “Major Putnam with a party of Provincials marching in the front, my Rangers in the rear, Capt. Dalzell with the regulars in the centre, the other officers suitably disposed among the men, being in number 530, exclusive of officers, a number having by leave returned home the day before.”

Putnam, at the head of the long and narrow line, and with the Connecticut men under his immediate command, had proceeded three-fourths of a mile, and was just emerging from the thicket-growth to enter the forest beyond, when yells and whoops rent the air, and the enemy began a furious onslaught. The surprised but undaunted Major halted, returned the fire, and passed the word for the other divisions to advance to



his support. "I brought my people into as good order as possible," says Rogers, who was some distance behind, "Capt. Dalzell in the centre, and the rangers on the right, with Col. Partridge's light infantry; on the left was Capt. Gidding's, of the Boston troops, with his people." \*

Meanwhile, a large and powerful Caughnawaga chief had sprung upon the brave leader at the front. In the fierce hand-to-hand fight, Putnam pressed the muzzle of his gun against his assailant's breast, but the weapon missed fire. With a loud war-whoop, the Indian warrior clutched his defenceless victim, and, brandishing his hatchet over him, compelled him to surrender. Putnam was dragged back into the forest and lashed fast to a tree. Then his captor returned to the battle. The Connecticut men, deprived of the inspiring

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\* Notwithstanding this statement of Rogers, in his *Journal*, p. 122, Humphreys, in his *Essay on the Life of Israel Putnam*, says: "Rogers came not up; but, as he declared afterwards, formed a circular file between our party and Wood-Creek, to prevent their being taken in rear or enfiladed. Successful as he commonly was, his conduct did not always pass without unfavourable imputation. Notwithstanding, it was a current saying in the camp, 'that Rogers always *sent*, but Putnam *led*, his men to action,' yet, in justice, it ought to be remarked here, that the latter has never been known, in relating the story of this day's disaster, to affix any stigma upon the conduct of the former."

Parkman, in commenting on this passage, says in his *Montcalm and Wolfe*: "Humphreys, the biographer of Putnam, blames Rogers severely for not coming at once to the aid of the Connecticut men; but two of their captains declare that he came with all possible speed; while a regular officer present, highly praised him to Abercrombie for cool and officer-like conduct. *Letter from the Camp at Lake George, 5 Sept., 1758*, signed by Captains Maynard and Giddings."

presence of their principal officer, had retreated among the thickets in confusion, but were soon reinforced by the men who had pressed their way through the bushes and briery undergrowth from the rear. Having quickly rallied with this aid, they checked the advancing enemy. Indeed, they succeeded in forcing them back beyond the spot where the action had begun. Owing to this change of battle-ground, the tree to which Putnam was tied was directly between the fires of the combatants. The account by Humphreys of the prisoner's perilous experiences is of special interest, not only because he had the facts from Putnam himself, but also because, as the historian Parkman says, he seems to give the story with substantial correctness. His version—the earliest that we have—must be the basis of any other account. Humphreys describes Putnam's helplessness during the battle thus :

“The balls flew incessantly from either side, many struck the tree, while some passed through the sleeves and skirts of his coat. In this state of jeopardy, unable to move his body, or to stir his limbs, or even to incline his head, he remained more than an hour. So equally balanced, and so obstinate was the fight! At one moment, while the battle swerved in favour of the enemy, a young savage chose an odd way of discovering his humour. He found Putnam bound. He might have dispatched him at a blow. But he loved better to excite the terrors of the prisoner, by hurling a tomahawk at his head, or rather it should seem that his object was to see how near he could throw it without touching him—the weapon struck in the tree a number of times at hair's breadth distance from the mark. When the Indian had finished his amusement, a French bas-officer (a much more inveterate savage by nature, though descended from so humane and polished a nation) perceiving Putnam, came up to him, and, levelling a fuzee within a foot of his breast, attempted to discharge it—it missed fire. Ineffectually did the intended victim solicit the treatment due to



TRADITION SAYS THIS IS THE TREE TO WHICH PUTNAM WAS TIED  
AFTER HE WAS CAPTURED BY THE INDIANS IN AUGUST, 1758.



his situation by repeating that he was a prisoner of war. The degenerate Frenchman did not understand the language of honour or of nature : deaf to their voice, and dead to sensibility, he violently, and repeatedly, pushed the muzzle of his gun against Putnam's ribs, and finally gave him a cruel blow on the jaw with the butt-end of his piece. After this dastardly deed he left him."

In the battle that raged not far away, the scene of which had again shifted, the English were still making a heroic resistance. Some of them fought in open view ; others fired from behind trees. At last the Canadians gave way, sixty of them deserting Marin at a critical moment. " This somewhat astonished the Indians," according to the French account of the battle, " and prevented that brave officer from deriving all the advantage from the circumstance." Having found that more of his men were leaving him and that " the English were too numerous to be forced," Marin ordered his wounded to be removed and withdrew all his force. The battle had lasted almost two hours.\* Forty-nine of the English had been killed. It was reported soon afterwards that the enemy lost more than twice that number. The English buried all their own dead and made litters of branches with which to carry their wounded comrades. Then they resumed the march southward which had been tragically interrupted, and reached Fort Edward the next day.

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\* The principal authorities for the battle itself are : *Journals of Major Robert Rogers*, pp. 121-123 ; *Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, vol. x. ; Malartic, *Journal du Regiment de Béarn* ; De Lévis, *Journal de la Guerre en Canada* ; *Recollections of Thomas Maxwell*, a soldier present ; *Historical Collections of the Essex Institute*, vol. vii., p. 97 ; *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1758, p. 498 ; Letters from camp in *Boston Gazette*, No. 117 ; *New Hampshire Gazette*, No. 104.



Putnam in the meantime was faring ill in the hands of savages. For his adventures in captivity, Humphreys again is the authority. This is the story of what happened at the close of the battle, as he recorded it from the hero's own narration :

“As they [the enemy] were retiring, Putnam was untied by the Indian who had made him prisoner, and whom he afterwards called master. Having been conducted for some distance from the place of action, he was stripped of his coat, vest, stockings and shoes ; loaded with as many of the packs of the wounded as could be piled upon him ; strongly pinioned, and his wrists tied as closely together as they could be pulled with a cord. After he had marched through no pleasant paths in this painful manner, for many a tedious mile, the party (who were excessively fatigued) halted to breathe. His hands were now immoderately swelled from the tightness of the ligature ; and the pain had become intolerable. His feet were so much scratched, that the blood dropped fast from them. Exhausted with bearing a burden above his strength, and frantic with torments exquisite beyond endurance, he entreated the Irish interpreter to implore, as the last and only grace he desired of the savages, that they would knock him on the head and take his scalp at once, or loose his hands. A French officer, instantly interposing, ordered his hands to be unbound and some of the packs to be taken off. By this time the Indian who captured him and who had been absent with the wounded, coming up, gave him a pair of moccasins, and expressed great indignation at the unworthy treatment his prisoner had suffered. That savage chief again returned to the care of the wounded, and the Indians, about two hundred in number, went before the rest of the party to the place where the whole were that night to encamp. They took with them Major Putnam, on whom, besides innumerable other outrages, they had the barbarity to inflict a deep wound with a tomahawk, in the left cheek.”

The mark of this blow Putnam is said to have borne through life. “A deep scar on the cheek of that veteran warrior,” says Abiel Holmes in his *Annals of*

*America*, in referring to this incident, "is well remembered by the writer, who believes it was the wound inflicted by the tomahawk."

Now comes the most tragic scene of the day in Putnam's eventful captivity. We can easily imagine the absorbing interest with which Humphreys listened to the tale of "horror." He has given us this description of what the Indians planned for their victim :

"It was determined to roast him alive. For this purpose they led him into a dark forest, stripped him naked, bound him to a tree, and piled dry brush, with other fuel, at a small distance, in a circle round him. They accompanied their labours, as if for his funeral dirge, with screams and sounds inimitable but by savage voices. Then they set the piles on fire. A sudden shower damped the rising flame. Still they strove to kindle it, until, at last, the blaze ran fiercely round the circle. Major Putnam soon began to feel the scorching heat. His hands were so tied that he could move his body. He often shifted sides as the fire approached. This sight, at the very idea of which all but savages must shudder, afforded the highest diversion to his inhuman tormentors, who demonstrated the delirium of their joy by correspondent yells, dances, and gesticulations. He saw clearly that his final hour was inevitably come. He summoned all his resolution and composed his mind, as far as the circumstances could admit, to bid an eternal farewell to all he held most dear. To quit the world would scarcely have cost a single pang but for the idea of home, for the remembrance of domestic endearments, of the affectionate partner of his soul, and of their beloved offspring."

On this very day when Putnam was threatened by a most cruel fate, when his thoughts turned towards his wife and children, there occurred a pathetic coincidence. Death entered his distant home. The sad fact appears on the old gravestone in the cemetery at Brooklyn, Connecticut:

"In Memory of M<sup>r</sup>. Daniel Putnam, son of Col<sup>o</sup>. Israel Putnam & Mrs. Hannah his wife, who died Aug. 8th, 1758, Aged 17 years."

Unexpected deliverance came to Putnam in his torturous and dire situation, for—to continue the early narrative—

"a French officer rushed through the crowd, opened a way by scattering the burning brands and unbound the victim. It was Molang [Marin] himself—to whom a savage, unwilling to see another human sacrifice immolated, had run and communicated the tidings. That commandant spurned and severely reprimanded the barbarians, whose nocturnal powwas and hellish orgies he suddenly ended. Putnam did not want for feeling or gratitude. The French commander, fearing to trust him alone with them, remained until he could deliver him in safety into the hands of his master."

Judge Samuel Putnam, in writing about this adventure which the hero himself once recounted to him, says that the rescuer was "one of the tribe, a chief who had once been a prisoner of Putnam and treated kindly by him." This seems to refer to the Indian whom Humphreys mentions as carrying the news to Marin of what was going on in the forest. There is an interesting tradition among Freemasons that Putnam, as a member of the secret order, gave in his great peril the sign of distress, which, on being recognised by a person present who belonged to the fraternity, led to his rescue.

The story of how Putnam spent the night after his strange experience is told by Humphreys in the following paragraph, in which we learn that although the Caughnawaga chief, "the master," showed unusual regard for his captive, he subjected him to the ordinary

Indian mode of securing prisoners by binding him in the form of a St. Andrew's cross :

"The savage approached his prisoner kindly, and seemed to treat him with particular affection. He offered him some hard biscuit ; but finding that he could not chew them, on account of the blow he had received from the Frenchman, this more humane savage soaked some of the biscuit in water, and made him suck the pulp-like part. Determined, however, not to lose his captive (the refreshment being finished) he took the moccasins from his feet and tied them to one of his wrists ; then directing him to lie down on his back upon the bare ground, he stretched one arm to its full length, and bound it fast to a young tree ; the other arm was extended and bound in the same manner—his legs were stretched apart and fastened to two saplings. Then a number of tall but slender poles were cut down, which, with some long bushes, were laid across his body from head to foot ; on each side lay as many Indians as could conveniently find lodging, in order to prevent the possibility of his escape. In this disagreeable and painful posture he remained until morning. During this night, the longest and most dreary conceivable, our hero used to relate that he felt a ray of cheerfulness come casually across his mind, and could not even refrain from smiling when he reflected on this ludicrous group for a painter, of which he himself was the principal figure."

Putnam's journey on August 9th with his captor and his arrival at the French fort are recorded by Humphreys thus :

"The next day he was allowed his blanket and moccasins and permitted to march without carrying any pack or receiving any insult. To allay his extreme hunger, a little bear's meat was given, which he sucked through his teeth. At night the party arrived at Ticonderoga and the prisoner was placed under the care of a French guard. The savages, who had been prevented from glutting their diabolical thirst for blood, took every opportunity of manifesting their malevolence for the disappointment by horrid grimaces and angry gestures ; but



they were suffered no more to offer violence or personal indignity to him."

Within a week after Putnam was captured, the garrison at Fort Edward received news of him and other prisoners, according to Captain David Holmes's Orderly Book: "Aug. 14. By a flag of truce, informed that Major Putnam, Lieut. Tracy and 3 others, were carried without wounds into Fort Caroline [Ticonderoga]." But Holmes—a friend of Putnam, and he was also an officer from the same colony—and the other soldiers did not hear at that time of the brutal treatment which their brave Connecticut comrade had undergone.

Into the presence of Montcalm Putnam was led at Ticonderoga. Each must have regarded the other with special interest. Here was the commander about whom Putnam had heard so much, the ablest French general in America, who is described as "a man of small stature, rapid, vehement utterance, and nervous gesticulation." As for the prisoner whom Montcalm saw before him, his tattered, scratched, scorched, and bruised condition plainly told of the painful experiences through which he had passed. After being questioned, Putnam was given into the custody of a French officer, who received orders to conduct him to Montreal. On the journey thither, the Frenchman treated his charge with the "greatest indulgence and humanity."

Among the English prisoners already at Montreal was Colonel Peter Schuyler of New Jersey, who, as soon as he heard of the arrival of a provincial major recently taken, went to the interpreter's quarters and inquired solicitously about him.

"He found Major Putnam," says Humphreys, "in a comfortless condition—without coat, waistcoat, or hose—the remnant of his clothing miserably dirty and ragged—his beard long



and squalid—his legs torn by thorns and briars—his face gashed with wounds and swollen with bruises.”

Colonel Schuyler was not only indignant on finding his fellow-prisoner in such a sorry plight, but also showed his sympathy for him at once, attending personally to his needs by supplying him with clothing and money.

The weariness of captivity was relieved for Putnam at Montreal by the privilege of staying at the house of Colonel Schuyler, whose wealth and military rank were respected by the French by special favours. But Putnam was soon transferred to Quebec. He was there the last of August, according to a letter written from Quebec on the 31st of that month by a French officer, who in speaking of the English whom Marin had captured on the 8th said, “Two of them, officers, are now here.”

The military affairs of the English took a very favourable turn during the campaign. The summer was almost ended when Abercrombie's army, near the southern end of Lake George, was cheered not only by tidings of the fall of Louisbourg but also by the “glorious piece of news” that Lieutenant-Colonel Bradstreet, who had been sent against Fort Frontenac on the northern shore of Lake Ontario, had reduced that important French post on August 27th. How soon Putnam himself heard of these English successes we do not know. The surrender of Fort Frontenac proved of much importance to him personally, for his own release was the consequence.

In October, 1758, General Abercrombie and the Marquis de Vaudreuil, Governor of Canada, were in correspondence in regard to an exchange of the

prisoners. It was decided that Colonel Schuyler, who was himself to be exchanged for De Noyan, the captured commandant of Fort Frontenac, should be entrusted with the arrangement of all details on the English side.

"I am pleased, Sir," wrote Vaudreuil to Abercrombie on October 19th from Montreal, "that you have authorised Colonel Schuyler to negotiate an exchange of the prisoners in question with me. I have written to him that he was at liberty to go to town for that purpose ; he will be present himself at Quebec." \*

Two weeks later, when the list of English prisoners to be exchanged had been made out, the same writer said in a letter to a French official, "I have paid particular attention to retaining those who appeared to me the most suspicious."

But Vaudreuil had unwittingly consented to the liberation of one who had been of invaluable service to the English. Putnam's name was on the list by a stratagem of the officer who had already befriended him in need. This is Humphreys's story of Schuyler's "justifiable finesse":

"Apprehensive if it should be known that Putnam was a distinguished partisan his liberation might be retarded, and knowing that there were officers who, from the length of their captivity, had a claim of priority to exchange, he had by his happy address induced the governor to offer that whatever officer he might think proper to nominate should be included in the present cartel. With great politeness in manner, but seeming indifference as to object, he expressed his warmest acknowledgments to the governor and said, 'There is an old man here who is a Provincial Major, and wishes to be at home with his wife and children ; he can do no good here or any-

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\* *Documents relating to the Colonial History of New York*, vol. x.

where else ; I believe your Excellency had better keep some of the young men, who have no wife or children to care for, and let the old fellow go home with me.' "

The aged prisoner whose freedom was thus obtained was just forty years old !

Nearly a hundred and fifty persons, including officers, soldiers, sailors, labourers, women, and children, were to be exchanged by the French for an equal number of their own countrymen.\* Colonel Schuyler with some of the liberated prisoners preceded the others on the way back to Fort Edward, but before he set out from Montreal he commended to Putnam's care on the homeward journey Mrs. Jemima Howe and her children. This New England widow, whose husband, Caleb Howe, was murdered by Indians in 1755, had been, like many other persons in captivity, the object of Schuyler's special sympathy and charity, and welcomed at his house. It was there that Putnam became acquainted with her. He heard from Mrs. Howe's own lips her pathetic story: how, on a July evening three years before, she, with her seven children, one an infant of six months, and the wives of Hilkiah Grout and Benjamin Gaffield, with their own little ones, were in the fort in which the three families lived at Hinsdale, New Hampshire ; how, while they were expecting their husbands home from the day's work in the cornfield, they were startled by the firing of guns ; how they soon heard footsteps approaching and thought the men were returning ; how they hastily opened the

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\* In the "List of English prisoners who are going up from Quebec to Montreal to contribute to the exchange," which may be found among the New York colonial manuscripts, Putnam's name is curiously spelled thus: "Polman, Captain-Major in the New England Regiment."

gate to receive them, but only to find to their utter and dreadful surprise that they had admitted savages; then the piteous sequel, how all in the fort were hurried away captives, and compelled to travel on foot to Canada by way of Crown Point,—how she was herself separated from her children and sold to a French officer named Saccabee, who as well as his son treated her dishonourably; finally, how Colonel Schuyler, to whom she applied for help, succeeded in obtaining not only her own freedom but also that of three of her sons, and how two more children were restored to her.

In November Putnam started homeward with the family entrusted to him. The younger Saccabee is said to have followed them a part of the way, much to the alarm of Mrs. Howe. She was, however, gallantly defended, for Putnam “informed the young officer that he should protect that lady at the risk of his life.” Of the same guardian on that long journey from Canada “through an inhospitable wilderness,” we have this picture in Humphreys’s quaint style :

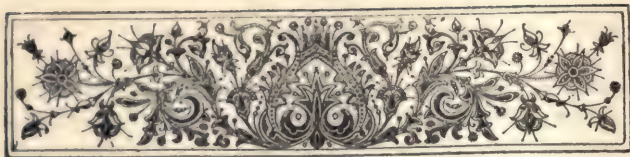
“There were a thousand good offices which the helplessness of her [Mrs. Howe’s] condition demanded, and which the gentleness of his nature delighted to perform. He assisted in leading her little ones, and in carrying them over the swampy grounds and runs of water with which their course was frequently intersected. He mingled his own mess with that of the widow and the fatherless, and assisted them in supplying and preparing their provisions. Upon arriving within the settlements they experienced a reciprocal regret at separation, and were only consoled by the expectation of soon mingling in the embraces of their former acquaintances and dearest connections.”

That was an affectionate reunion indeed in Putnam’s own home. If the wife had already heard that her

soldier husband had been taken prisoner, how full of intense suspense must the hours and days have been for her. Even if the news of his great misfortune had not reached her, her heart had been heavy with solicitude for his safety. With the gladness of Putnam's return was mingled sorrow for the missing one, and now he heard the details of Daniel's illness and death. We can see the family group,—the hero with his wife by his side, little Eunice in his arms, and gathered about him the four young girls and sturdy lad Israel. Eagerly must Putnam have listened to what had happened in his absence ; and often during the winter, his adventures in the memorable campaign must have been the subject of breathless attention in the home circle and at the neighbouring firesides.



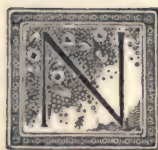




## CHAPTER IX

### THREE MORE CAMPAIGNS

1759-1761



NOTWITHSTANDING his severe experiences, Putnam was ready to accept his appointment by the General Assembly of his colony as Lieutenant-Colonel in the Fourth Regiment (Colonel Fitch's), which, together with the other Connecticut troops, was to be employed, in 1759, in another expedition against Ticonderoga and Crown Point. The Commander-in-chief for the new campaign was Sir Jeffrey Amherst, who had been so successful in capturing Louisbourg. It was decided that General James Wolfe should advance up the St. Lawrence and lay siege to Quebec as soon as the river was free from ice, and that Amherst himself, after leading the grand central advance against Ticonderoga and Crown Point, should proceed with his army down the Richelieu to the St. Lawrence and join Wolfe before the walls of Quebec. In May, Putnam must have been at Albany, for the soldiers gathered during that month at this rendezvous of former years. Before the 1st of July, General Amherst had advanced with about eleven thousand men, half regulars and half provin-

cials, to the southern end of Lake George. There the troops were busily employed in cutting down and burning trees on both sides of the Fort Edward road ; in building fortified posts along it at intervals of three or four miles, especially at the station known as Half-way Brook ; in beginning a fort on the low, flat, rocky hill where, during the siege of Fort William Henry, the English had an intrenched camp ; in transporting stores and cannon from Fort Edward ; and in constructing bateaux and other craft for the expedition. Some of this varied work was assigned to the Connecticut regiment, of which Israel Putnam was second in command.

The English remained nearly a month at the head of Lake George before moving forward. On the morning of July 21st, the whole army embarked for Ticonderoga. And now Israel Putnam witnessed an imposing spectacle similar to that of the preceding year. Again the banners and music and arms and uniforms made a brilliant military pageant, as the great flotilla moved over the blue surface of the lake amid the picturesque summer scenery. When the day drew to a close, the troops had reached the vicinity of the outlet. There they passed a disagreeable night, being tossed on the waves raised by a summer gale. The next day the army "landed without opposition," according to General Amherst, "and proceeded to the Saw Mills, and took post on the commanding grounds, meeting only a trifling opposition from the enemy." "We lay on our arms all night," adds the Commander-in-chief, "and early on the 23rd we continued our march."

Soon the English reached the famous works before which Abercrombie's army had been terribly repulsed the year before. The French now made no attempt to defend the line of intrenchment which had been

reconstructed partly of earth and partly of logs, but retreated within the fort beyond and opened fire from there. The English, however, found protection from the guns by encamping along the front of the intrenchment which the French had abandoned.

Israel Putnam commanded in person some of the provincials who were employed in bringing up the artillery and stores. He must have been impressed by the contrast between the present method of moving against Ticonderoga and that adopted the summer before by Abercrombie. The prudent and resolute Amherst, aware of the principal causes of his predecessor's failure, carefully reconnoitred the French position and waited until his cannon and requisite munitions of war had arrived. Then he began approaches in form.

The enemy's force, which numbered between two and three thousand men, was commanded by the Chevalier de Bourlamaque. On the night of July 23rd, this French officer suddenly retreated with the main body of his troops down Lake Champlain, leaving several hundred men within the fort to keep up a brisk fire with cannon and mortars on the English. Meanwhile, the besiegers were busily engaged in preparations for an assault. Putnam was one of the most active officers in driving forward the works.

On the night of July 26th, after the batteries were finished and were in readiness to open at break of day, three French deserters arrived in the English camp, excitedly announcing that the garrison was abandoning Ticonderoga and that a slow match attached to the magazine was already lighted to blow the fort to atoms. The report of the retreat was not altogether a surprise, for a suspicious movement of the garrison had been detected at dusk. Before midnight

the explosion occurred. The glaring flash and terrific roar were succeeded by a brief, breathless interval; then came the sound of fragments, which had been hurled into the air, falling on the ground and into the lake. Only one bastion, however, had been blown up. The main part of the fort was little injured, but the barracks and other inflammable portions had caught fire.

As soon as the powder magazine had spent itself, Amherst ordered men forward into the fort, but, according to one of them, "three-fourths" of the barracks were burnt "before we could extinguish the flames." With what great interest Israel Putnam must have examined the redoubted stronghold which had at last been captured! Soldiers were immediately set to work repairing the damages from the explosion and rebuilding the parts of the fort destroyed by the fire, and Putnam was given the oversight of some of these labourers.

Within a week after entering Ticonderoga, the English were informed by scouts that the French had abandoned Crown Point also. Amherst accordingly advanced to that place with a part of his army. He planned at once for new works there, because the French fort, built many years before, was so dilapidated that it seemed unwise to repair it. He chose a more commanding site, about six hundred feet south-west of the old fort, and began an extensive stronghold, the ruins of which may still be seen. In this task, Israel Putnam, who had accompanied the force from Ticonderoga, was employed during the remainder of the summer and into the autumn, superintending the parties which were detached to procure timber and other materials for the fortification.



While the army was busily occupied in building and strengthening the strongholds on Lake George, rumours of the success of other English expeditions of 1759 were confirmed. Israel Putnam now heard in more detail how General Prideaux had been killed in the trenches by a cannon-ball, while his army was besieging Fort Niagara; how Sir William Johnson, who had succeeded to the command, had routed, on July 24th, a reinforcement sent to the relief of the French garrison, and how on the next day he had captured the fort. Soon came more thrilling tidings, how the gallant Wolfe, with nearly five thousand men, had scaled the Heights of Abraham on the night of September 12th; how the astonished Montcalm, beholding at dawn the ranks of redcoats on the Plains, had ordered his troops into action that morning; how in the fierce pitched battle, Wolfe, like Montcalm, had fallen mortally wounded, and how victory had finally crowned the English arms at Quebec. The French possessions in Canada were reduced in 1759 to the narrow strip of territory on the St. Lawrence between Jacques Cartier and Kingston. The only important posts remaining for the English to capture were Montreal and Isle-aux-Noix, but all attempts against these places were postponed to the next campaign.

When military operations were suspended for the winter, Putnam returned home. His infant son, born November 18th of this year (1759), was named Daniel, in tender memory of that other son Daniel who died on the eventful August day, fifteen months before, when the father himself was face to face with death.

The campaign of 1760 opened auspiciously for the English. Encouraged by the successes of the preceding year, the colonists in general felt that the final



blow against the French power in Canada would soon be struck. They responded, therefore, more readily to the call for troops. General Amherst, still Commander-in-chief of all the English troops in America, received instructions early in 1760 from King George to proceed to the vigorous attack of Montreal. He accordingly planned to concentrate his forces from three directions, east, south, and west, for the "great and essential object." General James Murray, who after the death of Wolfe had succeeded to the command of the army at Quebec, was to advance up the St. Lawrence River from that captured city; at the same time, Brigadier-General William Haviland was to take the Lake Champlain course to Montreal, which Amherst had attempted in the preceding campaign, and reduce Isle-aux-Noix on the way; meanwhile the Commander-in-chief himself was to lead the main army down the St. Lawrence from Lake Ontario, and join Murray and Haviland in front of Montreal.

The Connecticut troops formed a part of the force which Amherst commanded in person. The soldiers for this expedition began to assemble in May at Albany. There Putnam arrived from Pomfret after the few weeks spent at home. The route of Amherst's men was from Albany to Schenectady, up the Mohawk River to Fort Stanwix on the Great Carrying Place, across Oneida Lake and down the Onondaga River to Oswego. It was two months from the time that the first troops left Albany in June until all of them reached the shore of Lake Ontario and were ready to embark. They numbered more than ten thousand in all.

On August 7th, the first division of the army left Oswego, led by Colonel Haldimand. Two days later General Amherst set out with the second division,

consisting of the Royal Artillery, regulars, and some of the Indians. The rest of the troops followed on August 12th. Putnam was in this last division. It included eight battalions of provincials from New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut, and was under Brigadier-General Thomas Gage. Between this officer and Israel Putnam there grew up a friendship which extended into the American Revolution, although in the latter war Gage was general-in-chief on the British side.

On the morning of August 15th, the three divisions of the army afloat neared the north-eastern end of Lake Ontario. There they encountered the French vessel *Ottawa*. She appears to have been the second war-ship to threaten destruction to the English force after it entered the St. Lawrence River. When the first one, which mounted twelve guns, hove in sight on August 16th, General Amherst was in great distress. His own armed vessels, under Captain Loring, had lingered behind, having become bewildered among the channels of the Thousand Islands; and the enemy's ship was capable of making serious havoc among the bateaux and whaleboats. In this emergency, Putnam's ingenuity and daring were of great service to his commander, according to the following anecdote quoted from *Almon's Remembrancer* for 1775:

"While he [Amherst] was pondering what should be done, Putnam comes to him and says, 'General, that ship must be taken.' 'Aye,' says Amherst, 'I would give the world she was taken.' 'I'll take her,' says Putnam. Amherst smiled and asked how? 'Give me some wedges, a beetle (a large wood hammer or maul, used for driving wedges), and a few men of my own choice.' Amherst could not conceive how an armed vessel was to be taken by four or five men, a beetle, and wedges. However, he granted Putnam's request. When night came, Putnam, with his materials and men, went in a boat under the

vessel's stern and in an instant drove in the wedges behind the rudder in the little cavity between the rudder and ship and left her. In the morning the sails were seen fluttering about ; she was adrift in the middle of the lake, and being presently blown ashore was easily taken."

This anecdote of the beetle and wedges is considered reliable by John Fiske\* ; and other trustworthy American historians are of the same opinion. The ship, which was thus disabled in the night by the bold provincial officer, is said to have surrendered on the approach of a thousand men whom Putnam had ordered to move swiftly forward in fifty bateaux in order to board her.

On the same morning the other French war-ship, the *Ottawa*, was attacked by the English and captured. Although Putnam's name is not mentioned in the accounts of this victory, he doubtless took some part in it. He seems to have at least planned to wedge the rudder of the *Ottawa* also ; and the naval success had been made possible by the capture of the first ship.

The surrender of the two French vessels uncovered Fort Lévis, which had been built the year before. It stood on Isle Royale in the midchannel of the St. Lawrence, near the head of the rapids, a short distance below Oswegatchie. Amherst determined to take the fortification, for he wished to leave no post of the enemy in his rear, and he expected to find among the garrison pilots who could guide his boats down the rapids. The siege was accordingly begun within a few hours after the naval victory. The whole army moved down to Oswegatchie and encamped there in the afternoon of

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\* Article on "Israel Putnam" in Appleton's *Cyclopedia of American Biography*.

August 17th. Both shores were reconnoitred during the night, and the next day some of the troops, including Connecticut men under Putnam, were ordered to take possession of the islands just below Fort Lévis. They proceeded in bateaux, but in passing the fort were fired upon and suffered some loss. Batteries were begun on the points of two of the islands, Isles Galot and Picquet. The next morning three New York regiments with all their artillery passed the fort under fire from the enemy. Other islands were taken and batteries prepared. Three days longer the work of investing Fort Lévis continued and during that time the French garrison under Captain Pouchot kept their cannon more or less active in attempting to repel the besiegers. As soon as the English war-ships under Captain Loring arrived, Amherst ordered them to move down the river and post themselves as close to the fort as possible. They were "to fire upon the enemy," says Mante, "and prevent their making use of their guns whilst the grenadiers rowed in with their broadswords and tomahawks, fascines and scaling-ladders under cover of three hundred of the light infantry, who were to fire into the embrasures." \* But this plan of assault had to be postponed on August 23rd on account of the running aground of the *Onondaga*, and two days later its execution was made unnecessary by the surrender—"a fortunate event," exclaims Mante, "as it saved a good deal of blood." When Amherst was planning to storm the enemy's stronghold on the island, one of the problems had been how to pass over a high abattis of black-ash which surrounded the fortress. Everywhere it projected over the water.

\* *History of the late War in North America*; see also M. Pouchot, *Memoir upon the late War in North America*, 1755-1760.



Dear General

After miss Balch came to me with your order  
I immediatly went on board all the row gallees  
and told them it was your Orders  
that they proceed up the river with 2 fire  
ships the 2 Rodisland gallees and the 2 built  
here immediatly raised anchor and proceed up  
the river the other 3 have not moved but  
now apply for 36 men which were paraded  
by my quarters for 2 or 3 hours and then  
went their way but I believe they never  
intend to go and I never intend to  
blame my self any more about them  
I am Dear Sir your most obedient humble  
Servant

Tuesday Evening 8. a. clock Israel Putnam.

FAC-SIMILE OF LETTER WRITTEN BY GENERAL ISRAEL PUTNAM.





The fertile mind of the dauntless Connecticut officer, whose originality had already impressed the commander, conceived a solution.

"Lieutenant-Colonel Putnam proposed a mode of attack," Humphreys narrates, "and offered his services to carry it into effect. The General approved the proposal. Our partisan accordingly caused a sufficient number of boats to be fitted for the enterprise. The sides of each boat were surrounded with fascines, musket-proof, which covered the men completely. A wide plank, twenty feet in length, was then fitted to every boat in such manner, by having an angular piece sawed from one extremity, that when fastened by ropes on both sides of the bow it might be raised or lowered at pleasure. The design was that the plank should be held erect while the oarsmen forced the bow with the utmost exertion against the abattis; and that afterwards being dropped on the pointed brush it should serve as a kind of bridge to assist the men in passing over them."

Although the same writer states that "Putnam was particularly honoured by Amherst for his ingenuity in this invention," the possibility of getting over the abattis by such a device has been doubted. "From personal observation of the ground," writes Lossing, "I am inclined to think that a plank twenty feet long could hardly have reached the abattis from the water, even in a perpendicular position, unless the altitude of the shores was less then than now." The apparent impracticability of the plan has led some writers to consider the story as fabulous. On the other hand is the fact that Humphreys claims to give the details on the authority of the hero himself who was capable of proposing so original and venturesome an expedient and of energetically attempting to carry it into execution.

It does not appear in the next paragraph of Humphreys's account that the abattis was actually passed in

the way Putnam planned, but that the planks and fascines frightened the enemy and hastened the surrender:

“Lieutenant-Colonel Putnam, having made his dispositions to attempt the escalade in many places at the same moment, advanced with his boats in admirable order. The garrison, perceiving these extraordinary machines, waited not the assault but capitulated.”

But Humphreys seriously errs in his description of the capture of Fort Lévis in omitting mention of the bombardment and in giving the impression that Putnam's mode of advancing was the sole cause of the surrender.

After Fort Lévis was captured, the English army was employed five days in making the necessary preparations for advancing, and then on the morning of August 31st Amherst embarked with some of the troops. Putnam was in this first division. The rest of the army followed the next day. The journey from Fort Lévis to Montreal required a week. This was a very perilous part of the expedition, for the river abounded in intricate passages formed by the numberless small islands, and in cascades and whirlpools. These presented difficulties which the skill of the most experienced and stout-hearted guides could not wholly overcome. There was no serious mishap, however, in passing the Galops, the Rapide Plat, the Long Saut, and the Côteau du Lac, in succession, but when the army reached the Cedars, the Buisson, and the Cascades, the boats, notwithstanding the precautions which had been taken, became crowded together, and some of them were swept helplessly forward by the swift, foaming current. Putnam must have seen boat after

boat dashed madly against the rocks, for the forty-six which were totally wrecked, and the eighteen damaged, belonged to the first division. Eighty-four men were drowned.\* At length the dangerous rapids were passed and the flotilla glided out upon the still surface of Lake St. Louis. The army encamped, September 5th, on Isle Perrot. Here two messages arrived for General Amherst which must have gladdened his own heart and that of every soldier with him : one was from General Murray, saying that he was on Isle St. Thérèse, just below Montreal; the other was from Brigadier-General Haviland, announcing that he himself was already near the southern shore of the St. Lawrence, opposite the city, having captured Isle-aux-Noix on the way. Israel Putnam and his comrades now knew that the grand scheme of the Commander-in-chief was about to be accomplished, for in a few hours Montreal would be invested by three English armies.

On September 6th, Amherst's troops re-embarked and, having passed along the shore, landed at La Chine on the south-west end of the island of Montreal. After some of the artillery had been brought ashore, a few battalions of provincials were left to guard the boats, while the main body of troops marched to Montreal and encamped before its walls. Although Putnam was in the detachment which remained at La Chine, he must soon have been informed of what occurred during the next two days at the city nine miles distant.

Finding that the English, whose three armies

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\* There is an interesting contemporary portrait of Amherst after a painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds, which represents the commander solicitously watching his men as they are descending the most dangerous part of the rapids. It is reproduced in G. E. Hart's *Fall of New France*.

numbered seventeen thousand men, were rapidly planting their cannon to bombard the city, the French authorities began negotiations without delay, looking to the surrender of their chief remaining stronghold in Canada. The correspondence between the Marquis de Vaudreuil and General Amherst lasted until September 8th. Then the French governor, yielding to the demand that the whole garrison of Montreal and all other French troops in Canada lay down their arms, signed the capitulation. Thus "half the continent changed hands at the scratch of a pen," and without bloodshed the great object of this campaign had been accomplished. Now at last over the gate of Montreal was hoisted the flag of St. George.

Great clemency was shown the vanquished in compliance with the wish Amherst expressed when thanking his soldiers for their services. Some of the Indians, who had recently been allies of the French, quickly transferred their allegiance to the English. Near Montreal was Caughnawaga or Saut St. Louis, the seat of an Indian mission, with chapel, fortifications, and storehouses. There Putnam found the chief, his captor of two years before, who had conceived a special liking for the heroic prisoner and had remembered him with interest.

"That Indian," Humphreys relates, "was highly delighted to see his old acquaintance, whom he entertained in his own well-built stone house with great friendship and hospitality; while his guest did not discover less satisfaction in an opportunity of shaking the brave savage by the hand and proffering him protection in this reverse of his military fortunes."

Putnam had certainly cherished no ill-will or revengeful spirit towards the tribe of savages into whose



power he had once fallen. In the days of the American Revolution, when urging that the help of the Caughnawagas be retained in the fight for freedom, he declared his high opinion of them : " I know them to be a very brave nation and think it of importance they should be secured to our interest."

Within a week after the fall of Canada, Putnam was travelling back to Fort William Augustus, for the Connecticut regiments were ordered to set out in that direction on September 11, 1760. On account of the rapids and other obstacles in the route, two weeks passed away before the soldiers reached the fort. Then they were put to work upon it and continued at this task until the last of October, when the blustering weather prevented further labour. The provincials were permitted to go home. It is doubtful if Putnam could have reached Pomfret before November 21st. This was the date of another sad event in his home,—the death of little David, who was born in his absence and lived only one month and seven days.

Although the fate of Canada had been decided, and the New England people, like many other British subjects, had celebrated the event with much thanksgiving, the campaign of 1761 needed to be planned, in order " to reduce the enemy to the necessity of accepting a peace, on terms of Glory and advantage to His Majesty's Crown, and beneficial, in particular, to his subjects in America." Amherst was again made Commander-in-chief of the regular and provincial troops. At the session of the General Assembly in March, 1761, Connecticut promptly resolved to furnish two thousand three hundred men, and to form them into two regiments of twelve companies each. As in every

campaign of this war, Phineas Lyman was made Major-General of the colony's force. Israel Putnam was nominated by the lower House as Lieutenant-Colonel of the Second Regiment, of which Nathan Whiting was Colonel. In April, however, Lieutenant-Colonel Nathan Payson of the First Regiment died, and Putnam was transferred to fill the vacancy.

The campaign of 1761 was uneventful, compared with the previous years. Now that fighting was ended in Canada, the provincials were employed in repairing and strengthening the newly acquired forts and military posts as well as those fortifications which the English themselves had built. The Connecticut soldiers were assigned to work at Ticonderoga and Crown Point. Although we have no detailed account of Putnam's personal history during this year, we know that in these military operations which he shared he must have shown the energy and endurance for which he was distinguished in former and more exciting campaigns.

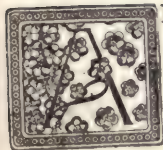




## CHAPTER X

### THE CAPTURE OF HAVANA

1762-1763



ALTHOUGH Canada had been conquered, more military service was demanded of the English colonists in 1762. Some of them were now to be employed in the West Indies; and Putnam was destined to share in the tragic experiences through which the regular and provincial soldiers passed in capturing the "Pearl of the Antilles."

George III. had become involved in a war with Spain, for Charles III. of that kingdom had entered, with Louis XV. of France, into the arrangement known as the Family Compact, by which the sovereign princes of the House of Bourbon agreed to support each other against the growing power of the King of England. After the English had captured, in the early part of 1762, Martinique and other West Indian islands which belonged to France, their next object of attack in the New World was the Spanish possession of Havana. For this purpose an expedition sailed from England in March, 1762, and appeared off the coast of Cuba early in June. It had been joined by other forces, and now consisted of nearly two hundred vessels, about

a fifth of which were ships of war. Admiral Sir George Pocock commanded the fleet, and General the Earl of Albemarle the army, which numbered eleven thousand men. The reinforcement which was expected from the English colonies in America had not yet arrived.

Connecticut had been called upon by the British government, "to raise the same number of men they raised for the last year's campaign." The Assembly had accordingly voted to furnish "twenty-three hundred able-bodied and effective men, officers included, . . . to be formed into two regiments, each regiment to consist of twelve companies." For the eighth consecutive year, we find Phineas Lyman appointed by the Assembly as "Major-General of the forces ordered to be raised in this Colony." This time the name next to Lyman's in the list of officers is that of "Israel Putnam, Esq''," who was made Lieutenant-Colonel of the First Regiment.

With the exception of the Tenth Company, which served with the Second Regiment at Crown Point during this campaign, the soldiers of the First Regiment assembled at New York City. There these thousand men, together with eight hundred volunteers from New York and five hundred from New Jersey, embarked, in the month of June, for the expedition against Havana. General Lyman had been put in command of the brigade and Lieutenant-Colonel Putnam was now acting colonel of the Connecticut regiment.

The greater part of the voyage was uneventful, but when at last the provincials approached the coast of Cuba a terrific hurricane arose, and the transport which carried Putnam and five hundred of his men was driven upon a rift of craggy rocks and wrecked. In this imminent danger Putnam was as calm and resource-



ful a hero as he had been at other perilous periods of his life. Above the roar of the angry billows he controlled his men to such a degree that a panic was prevented. For the original account of the shipwreck we are indebted to Humphreys, who has handed down to us in the following form the facts which he obtained from Putnam :

“The weather was so tempestuous and the surf, which ran mountain-high, dashed with such violence against the ship that the most experienced seaman expected it would soon part asunder. The rest of the fleet, so far from being able to afford assistance, with difficulty rode out the gale. In this deplorable situation, as the only expedient by which they could be saved, strict order was maintained, and all those people who best understood the use of tools instantly employed in constructing rafts from spars, plank, and whatever other materials could be procured. There happened to be on board a large quantity of strong cords (the same that are used in the whale fishery) which, being fastened to the rafts, after the first had with inconceivable hazard reached the shore, were of infinite service in preventing the others from drifting out to sea, as also in dragging them athwart the billows to the beach, by which means every man was finally saved.”

The same chronicler now mentions the precautionary measures of the efficient commander for the protection of the castaways until the arrival of the vessel sent to their relief :

“As soon as all were landed, Lieutenant-Colonel Putnam fortified his camp, that he might not be exposed to insult from inhabitants of the neighbouring districts or from those of Carthage, who were but twenty-four miles distant. Here the party remained unmolested several days, until the storm had so much abated as to permit the convoy to take them off.”

Coasting westward along the Cuban shore, the New



England soldiers must have gazed with great interest on the tropical scenery so strange to most of them. Fertile, undulating land, instead of wastes of sand or low flats, receded from the sea and rose in high hills which were covered with luxuriant verdure. At last, in the distance, the grey outlines of Morro Castle, contrasting strongly with the richness and peaceful beauty of nature, came in sight. Soon Putnam and all on board the vessel gained a nearer view of this grim, beetling fortress, between which and the frowning battlements of Punta was the deep, narrow entrance to Havana harbour. At a safe distance west of Morro Castle, Putnam and his men landed. They soon joined their comrades, who, having escaped being cast away in the storm, had arrived before them in this vicinity. It was now the last week in July. The siege of Havana had already been in progress nearly two months. The provincials—even those of them who had been shipwrecked—were in high spirits and were eager to share in the military operations against the Spaniards. Indeed, the reinforcement was heartily welcomed, for the besiegers were in a deplorable condition. Since the 7th of June, the date of their landing, the English troops under Lord Albemarle had suffered more from the climate than from the assaults of the defenders of Morro Castle. Under the fiery sun they had toiled at the breastworks on the surrounding heights. Hardly enough earth could be gathered from crevices in the parched rocks to hold the fascines firm. When at last the cannon had opened on the Spanish stronghold, the grand battery, which was little else than a heap of dry sticks, took fire and was consumed. The exhausting labour of rebuilding the defences in the tropic midsummer and the lack of proper food and drink wrought

fearful havoc among the English. Half the army lay ill of fever and many of the soldiers had died. It was at this critical time that, in the words of the early historian, Benjamin Trumbull, "the arrival of troops from North America [Putnam and the provincials] revived the drooping spirits of the English regulars, gave fresh vigour to their operations, and was of the most signal service." \*

With the aid of the Colonial reinforcement, Lord Albemarle determined to attempt at once to carry Morro Castle by storm. Ten days previous he had repulsed a formidable sally, and now, at last, his work of sapping had resulted in a practicable breach near the right bastion. On the afternoon of July 30th the assailants, led by Lieutenant Forbes of the Royals, advanced with great intrepidity. Having mounted the breach, they surprised and dispersed the garrison. The reduction of the fortress was complete. Five hundred of the enemy fell, including Don Luis de Velasco, the commander of the Morro; the English lost only two officers and thirty men. Many Spaniards were drowned in trying to reach the city. There is no detailed record of Putnam's part in the victorious action, but he was a sharer in the honours bestowed upon the members of the storming party for their gallant service.

After the fall of Morro Castle, the next object of Lord Albemarle was Havana itself. Works were begun on both sides of the city and were carried on for ten days. On the morning of August 11th, the English batteries, consisting of forty-five cannon, opened a heavy fire on the city. The bombardment continued until two o'clock in the afternoon. Then the Spaniards, seeing

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\* *History of Connecticut, 1630 to 1764.*

the uselessness of further resistance, offered to surrender. Two days later the negotiations were ended and Havana and its immediate territory passed into possession of the English.\* Nearly a thousand regular troops of the enemy became prisoners and were sent on board the English vessels. Putnam must have been one of the witnesses of the honourable terms granted the Spaniards; for, in sight of their captors, the soldiers marched out of the city with all the honours of war. Besides the success of the English on land, nine ships-of-the-line and four frigates surrendered to them in the harbour.

Unfortunately, the distribution of the prize money was accompanied by much injustice, for the "poor men got a lean share and the great chiefs were enriched." There is no record of the amount which Putnam received, but, like that of all the provincials, it was much less than it should have been. It was, however, large enough to be of considerable financial help to him after his return to his home in Connecticut, and it gave him added reputation there, among his neighbours, of being "very well-to-do."

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\* The details of the capture of Havana are given not only by Mante in his *History of the late War in North America*, pp. 398-465, but also by another contemporary English historian, Entick, in his *General History of the late War*, vol. v., pp. 363-383. The *Journal of the Siege by the Chief Engineer* is in Beatson's *Naval and Military Memoirs of Great Britain*, vol. ii., p. 544. In the Library of Congress at Washington, D. C., is a *Letter of Lieut. Col. A. Money Penny*, dated "Havana, 15th August, 1762," describing the siege. There is a plan of the siege, "drawn by an officer on the spot, 1762." It is reproduced in Winsor's *Narrative and Critical History of America*, vol. viii., p. 274, from the *Authentic Journal of the Siege* (London, 1763).

It is of great interest to us that there is still in existence an Orderly Book which was brought by Putnam himself from Havana.\* In this original and valuable source of information we have a daily record, from August 25 to October 16, 1762, of what was required of the Colonial troops soon after the surrender of Havana. Among the entries is one commanding the provincials to show respect for the religion of the conquered inhabitants. Doubtless this order was especially necessary because of the prejudice of the Puritan soldiers of New England against the Roman Catholics, whom they now saw in large numbers in priestly and religious garb. We learn from the same Orderly Book that Lord Albemarle adopted a liberal policy in allowing the Spanish citizens of Havana the privilege during the daytime of going out or coming into the town. They were "not to be Stopt by any Guard or Sentry." It was necessary to make repairs on the captured city and its fortifications, and special orders were accordingly issued in August for the provincials to set to work. Many details for provisioning the army are found in the Orderly Book. There are also allusions to the fevers which soon laid low many of the New England men. The entries relating to the care of the sick give an added interest to another contemporaneous document. This is none other than the Journal of the Rev. John Graham,† who had been with Putnam and the provincials at Fort Edward in 1756, and who was now again chaplain of the Connecticut troops. In the

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\* This Orderly Book is now in the possession of Charles Otis Thompson, of Pomfret, Conn., a lineal descendant of Putnam.

† Graham's Journal was printed in the *Year Book for 1895* of the New York Society of Colonial Wars; also in Halstead's *The Story of Cuba*.



quaint and pathetic language of this old-time minister, we have a description of the terrible scenes of suffering which Putnam must have witnessed. The minister's depression of spirit, caused by the "groans and outcries of the Sick and distressed," as well as by his own bodily ailments, was increased by his morbid religiousness and the apparent indifference of the soldiers to his Sunday ministrations. He tells of his interview with Putnam :

"Sabbath Day, Oct. 3, 1762.—Tho this day is by divine appointment Set apart as holy, and consecrated to holy uses yet in Camp, among the Troops, is set aside as common, and not so much as the least visible Shew or appearance of anything that is religious carried on ; but God and religion, Christ and Salvation are disregarded, condemn'd and dispised, and we live as tho' there was no God, no future Judgment, but as if we had given and preserved life to ourselves, and consequently were never to be accountable to any others how we lived or Spent our days.

"I asked Col. Putnam in ye Morning what there was to hinder publick Service—he answered, he knew nothing in the world to hinder it—I askt him if it was not duty if there was nothing to hinder—yes, answered he, by all means, and I wonder in my Soul why we don't have Service ; and add'd we could have prayers night and morning Just as well as not—but then says he, ther 'l be but few to attend, there 's so many Sick, and so many to attend the sick that there cou'd not be a Great many present at the services ; I replied—we had this to encourage us, where two or three are met together in my Name, Says God, there am I in the midst of them to bless them, so that it was not numbers that entitled to the blessing—that 's true, Says he, I will go down to the General [Lyman] and Speak to him about it, bides good by—have heard no more of it Since."

The reason why the chaplain heard no more of the matter was either because public services were found to be impracticable after all, with so much illness in



camp, or because General Lyman thought them of little importance and so took no action about having them held.

On Thursday morning, October 7th, according to Graham's Journal, "Col. Putnam and Lt. Parks went off into y<sup>e</sup> country to buy fresh provisions, Such as poultry, etc." When they returned on the following Monday, Parks had been taken ill, and it would appear from an entry two days later in the journal that before the week was ended this officer, like many another provincial, had died.

Graham gives melancholy figures in stating the number of Connecticut men who fell victims to the fatal fevers. By October 2nd, 184 were dead. During the week which followed that date, the list was increased to 207, and on October 16th it amounted to 226.

The old records of Connecticut show that many names were destined to be added to this sad list, making nearly 400 deaths in all in the regiment which Putnam commanded as acting colonel. The loss among the other provincial troops was in about the same proportion,—more than one-third of the force from each colony.

Putnam's capacity for remarkable physical endurance stood him in good stead during the dreadful days at Havana, but the added responsibilities arising from the condition of his men made heavy draughts upon his strength and, like Chaplain Graham, he must have "Long looked for, long expected, much desired to know the fixed time" when orders would be issued by Lord Albemarle for the provincial troops to embark for home. The eagerness of the Connecticut soldiers to "reach their native Shores and with wraptured

hearts o'er come with Joy, to Salute, embrace, and fall into the Arms, of their long wished for, wishing, lovely, loving friends," could not but have been increased by an event which brought distant scenes very vividly to their minds. This was the arrival, in Havana harbour, in early October, of a vessel from New London, with "the Joyful news of the prosperous Season in New England and the Smiles of divine providence upon the labours of the field."

At last, from headquarters the announcement was made of "six Transports appointed for the Connecticut Troops to Carry them to N. York." And now the provincials were happy, indeed. They were not long in embarking.

The *Royal Duke*, on which Putnam was aboard, came very near having a serious accident. Graham, his fellow-passenger, records :

"Thursday, Oct. 21.—Just at night going out of the harbour narrowly escaped running on the Rocks—the Ship struck once, but a wind Sprung up and carried us Clear—stood off to sea all night.

"Friday, Oct. 22. Return'd Back to find the fleet. Join'd the fleet toward night."

The vessels were soon well on the way towards their destination. Most of the soldiers were seasick. The sufferings of those who had not recovered from Cuban fever were greatly increased in the rough passage. Not a few died before New York was reached.

With Putnam on the homeward voyage was a negro servant whom he had rescued from cruel hands. The story is, that shortly before leaving Havana Putnam came across, in one of the streets of the city, an angry Spaniard severely beating a slave with a bamboo cane.

So indignant was the Colonel at the sight that, although he was unattended and defenceless, he rushed up to the master and wrested the cane from him, thus putting an end to the brutal scene. Instantly there gathered about Putnam a mob of Cubans, infuriated at what they considered an unwarranted interference by a foreigner. They would have attacked him had he not defeated their purpose by escaping to one of the ships at the wharf. The poor slave followed his rescuer and begged so earnestly to be taken on board that his request was granted. He insisted on remaining with Putnam, and gladly accompanied him to Connecticut, and became his faithful servant "Dick." The bamboo stick Putnam kept through life. He referred to it thus in dictating a memorandum on October 3, 1789,—a few months before his death :

"Walked out to-day supported by my Havana cane, which is a necessity in my present infirmity, and which I never carry without a remembrance of that day when I seized it."

He bequeathed the cane to the devoted coloured man, and it is said that a familiar sight at Brooklyn, Connecticut, used to be Dick in his old age hobbling about with it and proudly calling attention to "Massa Putnam's cane."

By the time that Putnam reached Pomfret the autumn of 1762 was ended. The next year and a half were spent by him in the peaceful pursuits of farm life. No details of his personal history, during this period, have come down to us. Like all his fellow-colonists he must have welcomed the cessation of hostilities between the mother country and her enemies. It was, doubtless, with chagrin that he heard that Havana, which had been wrested at fearful cost from Spain,

was restored to her. He afterwards learned, however, that by the terms of the treaty signed at Paris in February, 1763, Great Britain received Florida and all other Spanish possessions east of the Mississippi River in exchange for the portion of Cuba which had been given back. France, after her hard-fought but fruitless struggle for supremacy in North America, surrendered to the English, by the Paris treaty, Canada, Acadia, the Island of Cape Breton, with other islands in the Gulf and River of St. Lawrence, and also the territory between the Alleghany Mountains and the Mississippi; and, in order to indemnify Spain for the loss of Florida, she ceded to that country the city of New Orleans and the vast region called Louisiana, which lay west of the Mississippi.

Thus ended, in the New World, the long war in which Putnam had borne an important part. Although peace with Frenchmen and Spaniards was assured to the English colonists, new difficulties arose, and again the energetic and brave officer was called into military service.







## CHAPTER XI

### IN BRADSTREET'S EXPEDITION

1764

"This Assembly doth appoint Israel Putnam, Esq., to be Major of the forces now ordered to be raised in this Colony for his Majesty's service against the Indian nations who have been guilty of perfidious and cruel massacres of the English."



O reads an interesting entry in the colonial records of Connecticut for March, 1764. This legislative act was occasioned by an uprising of the savages under the crafty, ambitious, and powerful Pontiac, chief of the Ottawas.

After the fall of Canada, it seemed impossible that the loosely organised Indian tribes, deprived of French leadership, could co-operate for any general hostile movement. Therefore the English as a whole felt no apprehension in pursuing an intolerant course, and their garrisons frequently insulted and drove away the Indian visitors. In this state of affairs, Pontiac took advantage of the prejudice of the savages against the English, for his own dark purpose. He sent messengers with red-stained tomahawks and wampum war-belts in the autumn of 1762 to the Indians far and near, and succeeded in securing as allies most of the tribes



between the Alleghany Mountains and the Mississippi River and also the Senecas, one of the Six Nations. His plot was for a grand simultaneous attack in the month of May, 1763, on all the Western posts, each of which was, for this purpose, assigned to the tribe nearest to it. He planned in general that a few Indians with weapons concealed under their blankets should approach a fort and obtain admission on a pretext of friendship. Others, similarly armed, were to join their fellows until the number was large enough to attack the garrison; then on a signal they were to spring forward upon the English and either take them prisoners or massacre them. Many were the forts captured by the scheme of treachery, Pennsylvania especially becoming the scene of diabolical atrocities. The garrison at Detroit was to be attacked, May 7th, by the force which Pontiac was to lead in person, but, on the day before, an Indian girl disclosed the plot to Major Gladwyn, the commander there. The discomfited conspirators then assailed the fort and for weeks the sleepless English gallantly defended themselves. In November, 1763, Pontiac retired with his followers from Detroit, but it was soon evident that hostilities in general had only been suspended and the war would be renewed in the spring. The savage butcheries already committed made early action necessary in 1764, and General Thomas Gage, who had succeeded Amherst as Commander-in-chief, wrote to the colonies, earnestly calling for troops to suppress the "insurrections of the Indian nations."

Israel Putnam was especially alive to the duties of the coming campaign. The battalion which he was appointed by the General Assembly of Connecticut to command as Major consisted of five companies. At the May session the Assembly, in view of furnishing

more troops, made Putnam the "Lieutenant-Colonel of the forces raised in this Colony for the service of the present year."

The general plan of General Gage for 1764 was for two expeditions from different points into the heart of the Indian country. One was to be led by Colonel Henry Bouquet, who was to advance from Fort Pitt—which, like Fort Detroit, had been saved the previous year by being warned in season—into the Delaware and Shawanese settlements of the Ohio Valley; the other, under Colonel John Bradstreet, was to have for its object the relief of Major Gladwyn at Detroit and the subjection of the neighbouring tribes. It was in this latter expedition, the route of which was from Albany across the colony of New York and up Lakes Ontario and Erie, that Putnam and his Connecticut men served.

Bradstreet expected to start with his army in April, but he was prevented from doing so by the tardiness of the different colonies in furnishing troops. When at last he set out from Albany about the end of June his force, which did not number more than twelve hundred men, was much smaller than had been planned. Putnam had already been associated with this officer on various occasions, notably at the unsuccessful attack on Ticonderoga in 1758, and at the downfall of that stronghold the next year. It was Bradstreet's fortunate capture of Fort Frontenac in the autumn of 1758 that had brought about the exchange of prisoners, among whom was Putnam himself.

Among the original sources of information relating to Bradstreet's expedition is the Journal of Lieutenant John Montresor,\* who in the preceding year assisted in relieving the garrison at Fort Detroit with provisions

\* *Collections of New York Historical Society*, 1881.

when they were closely besieged by the Indians. This young Englishman, with whom as well as his father, Colonel James Montresor, Putnam had become well acquainted at Fort Edward in 1757, was now Bradstreet's engineer. The document which he has left contains direct references to Putnam.

When Bradstreet reached Fort Ontario with his men his force was increased by nearly six hundred Indians under Sir William Johnson. Among these savage allies was the chief who had once been Putnam's captor and since that time his friend. This Indian was now at the head of a hundred warriors of his own tribe. Their "fidelity" and "good behaviour" called forth special praise from Johnson. The affection which their native leader felt for Putnam kept these Caughnawagas particularly loyal in this expedition.

On July 3rd, at five o'clock in the evening, the flotilla, consisting of two vessels,—the *Mohawk*, with Colonel Bradstreet on board, and the *Johnson*, with Sir William Johnson,—seventy-five whaleboats, numerous canoes, and other craft—issued forth upon Lake Ontario and steered westward. A storm arose, much to the confusion of the men, but after several days of rough passage they all reached Fort Niagara in safety. A remarkable spectacle greeted the soldiers as they landed beneath the walls of the fort. A multitude of wigwams were pitched in clusters along the edge of the woods and a vast number of Indians, the variety of whose barbaric costumes added to the picturesqueness of the scene, strolled in groups over the plains or lounged about the sandy beach. This concourse had assembled at the invitation of Sir William Johnson, whose great influence over the savages was of signal service to the English. Conferences were begun with the deputa-

tions from the numerous tribes, and for a month, while the separate treaties were being made, the main army of the English remained at Fort Niagara.

After wearisome speech-making and many formalities, such as shaking of hands, smoking of pipes, and serving out of whiskey, a treaty of peace was concluded with the Indians by which a strip of land between the lakes Erie and Ontario, four miles wide on each side of the river Niagara, was ceded to the Crown of Great Britain. Lieutenant Montresor was now ordered by Colonel Bradstreet to advance with a detachment and build "a Post on the N. W. side of the River above the rapids at the mouth of Lake Erie." Israel Putnam and some of his men were among the four hundred and fifty provincials who were chosen for this work under the engineer. The detachment left Fort Niagara at dawn, on July 17th, and marched over the rough portage road which led towards the cataract. Having passed beyond the mighty fall of waters, the distant roar of which still sounded in their ears, the men reached Fort Schlosser at two o'clock in the afternoon. In two boats and bateaux, which had been dragged hither by oxen, they now pushed out into the Niagara River. That night the soldiers encamped on Navy Island. The next day they reached their destination and were set to work at once, notwithstanding the inclement weather. For nearly three weeks the "working-party and artificers" were busily engaged in "felling the Timber" and "cutting and burning the Brush" and "pointing the Stockades" and in other labour connected with the new military station which was named Fort Erie.

On August 8th, Bradstreet with the main army reached Fort Erie; and from this new post, upon which



they had laboured assiduously, Putnam and the other provincials accompanied the expedition. The flotilla crossed the lake on the morning of the 9th, and coasted along the southern shore until four o'clock in the afternoon. Then the army landed for the night. The journey was continued the next day, but on account of unfavourable weather the soldiers encamped at L' Anceaux-Feuilles, half-way between the present cities of Buffalo and Erie. While the troops waited at this place, holding themselves in readiness, according to orders, "to embark in case of a lull for a push to Presque Isle [now Erie, Penn.]," there arrived in camp ten strange Indians who announced that they were chief warriors and deputies whom the Delawares, Shawanese, and Five Nations inhabiting the Plains of Scioto had sent to entreat for a peace. The fact that these savages, who called themselves deputies, brought with them only one string of wampum with which to confirm a treaty, aroused suspicion at once, for, as a contemporaneous account says, they should have been "better provided with belts on such an occasion." The Indian allies were very desirous of the privilege of "knocking the Impostors on the Head"; and Putnam appears to have been one of the officers who, knowing from experience the treacherous character of the enemy, warned Bradstreet against putting trust in the overtures of the new arrivals. Notwithstanding the protests of his followers, the self-confident and headstrong commander entered into a preliminary treaty in which he promised to refrain from marching against the Delawares and Shawanese, provided that within twenty-five days the representatives of these tribes should meet him at Sandusky for the purpose of giving up prisoners and concluding a definite treaty.



Two weeks were spent by the English in passing from L'Ance-aux-Feuilles to Fort Detroit. During this time no serious accident occurred, although on certain days the boats were in considerable danger, "the wind and surf being very violent." The encampment for the night was usually at the mouth of a river. On August 17th the troops were at the Grand River. They advanced the next day to the site of the present city of Cleveland and pitched their tents on the bank of the Cuyahoga. Putnam and his Connecticut men expected to take part in an attack on the Wyandots, Ottawas, and Miamis, living in the vicinity of Sandusky, for Bradstreet had been ordered to give those Indians a thorough chastisement. At the approach of the English commander the three tribes sent deputies to meet him, saying that if he would abandon the hostile plan against them they would follow him to Detroit and make a treaty there. Duped by this promise, Bradstreet, after a brief stay at Sandusky, proceeded on his way and landed with his army near the mouth of the Raisin River for the night of August 26th. On the following day, "the 19th day from Fort Erie," the flotilla entered the Detroit River; and in the afternoon, with mingled feelings of relief and excitement, the soldiers saw before them their destination. This fortified town, known as Fort Detroit, stood on the western margin of the river and contained about a hundred houses. It was surrounded by a palisade twenty-five feet high; a wooden bastion was built at each corner and a blockhouse guarded each gateway. "On our arrival near the Fort we were saluted from thence & the vessels," says Montresor, "which [cannon salute] was returned from our Gun Boats." Ringing cheers rose from the ramparts where the garrison had crowded;

and on the shore friendly Indians shouted, whooped, and fired their guns. The heartiness with which the soldiers of the fort welcomed the reinforcements was still further demonstrated by the joyous personal greetings when Bradstreet and his men landed. The happiness of the occasion was increased by the fact that among the new arrivals were friends and former comrades of different members of the garrison. Putnam himself and Major Gladwyn, the commandant, had served together at Ticonderoga and Crown Point.

Although hostilities had been renewed by the Indians in the spring of 1764, Pontiac was still in the vicinity of the Maumee River, whither, in the preceding November, he had retired from the siege of Fort Detroit. He defied the English as relentlessly as ever by stirring up the Indians against this stronghold. No wonder that the garrison, having suffered for months from anxieties, privations, and dangers in a region swarming with revengeful savages, rejoiced in being relieved by fresh troops.

Bradstreet's men encamped above the fort on the north side. The engineer was immediately ordered "to make a Design & estimate for Barracks for 400 men to be constructed within the Fort." He completed the "Plans & Sections" on August 28th; and two days later a band of men under Putnam began felling trees on an adjacent island which was known then as Isle-au-Cochon and which has since become one of the parks of the city of Detroit, Belle Isle. The timber was to be used in building not only the proposed barracks but also "two scows for bringing of Stone & other materials." These boats were to be "70 feet in length by 18 in Breadth, to carry 25 Tons."

On the 31st of August, Montresor records: "The

party with Col. Putnam, consisting of 200 narrow ax men cutting Timber for Barracks, still remain at work." And they continued at their task until September 7th, on which date there is, in the same journal, this entry: " Came down from Isle au Cochon Colonel Putnam and the party of Provincials that have been employed there cutting of Timber for carrying on the works here."

It was doubtless to assist in the military display which had been ordered at the fort that the detachment under Putnam was summoned from the island ; for on this day Bradstreet held an open-air council with the Indians, and wished to inspire among them great awe of English arms.\* The concourse of savages, which Putnam and his men saw, on approaching the fort, was similar in some respects to that in the vicinity of Fort Niagara several weeks before. It was, however, smaller than Bradstreet had expected, for although it included Wyandots, Ottawas, Miamis, Sacs, Ojibwas, and Pottawattamies, the tribes dwelling near Sandusky had only partially kept their promise to be present at Fort Detroit. In the presence of the soldiers on parade and after harangues and barbaric formalities, the Indians took the " Oaths of allegiance and fidelity to his Britanic Majesty." The savages supposed, however, that they were simply asked to call themselves children of the King of England out of compliment to him. They could not comprehend that subjection and sovereignty were involved in their action.

Putnam, who thoroughly understood Indian charac-

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\* Major Thomas Mante, who accompanied this expedition, gives an account of this council with the Indians in his *History of the late War in North America, Including the Campaign of 1763 and 1764 against His Majesty's Indian Enemies*, pp. 517-524.

ter, must have realised how impracticable and absurd were Bradstreet's negotiations for peace on this occasion, and he must have been surprised that the commander so utterly disregarded savage custom as to hack in pieces with a hatchet a belt of wampum which had been brought to be used in the council—an act of Bradstreet that aroused the indignation of all the Indians present, both friends and enemies.

The week which followed the council of September 7th was spent by Putnam at the fort. On September 13th, Bradstreet was startled by news from Sandusky, "that the Indians to the number of 800 warriors had assembled there to oppose our troops from disembarking as proposed, instead of ratifying the treaty." Determined that his arrangement of August 12th for meeting the Delaware and Shawanese deputies by the middle of September should not thus be frustrated, Bradstreet issued orders at once for the troops to decamp and embark on the morrow for Sandusky. At eight o'clock in the morning, in the midst of the beautiful autumn scenery, for the trees on shore had already begun to "change their Hue," the flotilla, consisting of "60 of the Long Boats and one Barge," glided down the Detroit River and issued forth upon Lake Erie. Putnam, like every soldier in the expedition, expected to be engaged soon in fierce combat with the savage foe; but on the way Bradstreet was met by news different from several reports which had previously reached him. "Accounts now arrived," so writes the engineer on the third day after leaving Fort Detroit, "that the Delawares and Shawanese are assembled at Sandusky where the old Fort stood, in order to treat with us for Peace, agreeable to their appointment."

The troops entered Sandusky Lake or Bay about two



o'clock in the afternoon of September 18th, and, after some delay in finding a suitable place to land, encamped on a "good clay beach," half a mile west of the spot where, sixteen months previous, Pontiac's followers had butchered the English garrison and burned the fort.

None of the deputies whom Bradstreet had expected were in sight, but soon several savages approached the camp with a pledge that if he would not attack the Indian villages in the vicinity the promises to surrender prisoners and conclude a definite treaty would be fulfilled within a week. So seven more days were granted to the delinquent Delawares and Shawanese. Before that time expired Bradstreet's whole force, according to Montresor,

"embarked and proceeded and encamped one mile below the Rapids [of the Sandusky River] in order to meet them [the deputies] one day sooner, and also to be so much nearer to attack their villages on the Ohio should they fail to comply with every article alluded to in the Treaty of Peace."

It was at this "Camp near the Huron Village on Sandusky River" that Putnam, on the evening of September 23rd, served as "Field officer for the Picket." \* Here, too, he presided one morning at a "General Court Martial" held at eight o'clock at his own tent "to try all Prisoners brought before them."

Again the credulous Bradstreet was doomed to disappointment about meeting the Indian deputies, for

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\* *Regimental Orderly Book*. Subsequent entries in this document mention Putnam as "Field officer for Picket" under the following places and dates: "Camp Carrying place near Sandusky Lake 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct: 1764"; "Camp near La Rivierre Roché [Rocky River], Oct: 19th"; "Grand River, Oct: 25th"; "Grand River, Octo<sup>r</sup> 29th."



the seven days passed away, and not a chief appeared. Then the army returned down the Sandusky River, crossed the bay, and encamped at the carrying-place of Sandusky. A body of men was immediately set to work clearing ground for the construction of a fort. This working party was composed of provincials under Putnam. Nearly a month was spent by the troops at the carrying-place of Sandusky. Here Putnam wrote an interesting letter to Major Drake of Norwich, Connecticut, describing some personal impressions on this expedition and also obstacles met with in dealing with the Indians. The original manuscript is not in existence, but the letter was printed in the *Boston Gazette* of December 24, 1764, and in that form—the errors in spelling and punctuation, to which Putnam was prone, having been corrected by the editor of the old newspaper—it has been preserved to us. The letter, which is dated October 7, 1764, begins with a description of the country around Sandusky and Detroit :

“I can tell you the land here is good enough, and suppose you will think it strange if I should tell you that in many places in this country there are ten or twenty thousand acres of land in a place that have not a bush or twig on them, but all covered with grass so big and high that it is very difficult to travel—and all as good plough-land as ever you saw ; any of it fit for hemp ; but there are too many hemp birds among it, which will make it very unhealthy to live among. Detroit is a very beautiful place and the country around it.”

Putnam writes next, in this letter, of the messengers who were dispatched in order to persuade the Indians to treat of peace :

“We sent out [August 16th] an officer and three Indians to the Delawares and Shawanese from Presque Isle, who returned [in October] and were illy used [by the enemy]. We sent the like

number [August 26th] from Sandusky, but all before any one returned. From Sandusky we sent Captain Montieur [Montour] and Captain Peters; from [Sandusky, by way of the] Maumee [River], we sent Captain [Thomas] Morris of the 17th [Regiment], and one Thomas King with three Indians."

Putnam and Morris had been comrades in other campaigns. The melancholy experience of the latter, on his embassy to the Illinois, is mentioned in this letter. Morris reached Fort Detroit after the main army had left there, but he forwarded to Sandusky his journal, giving an account of the treatment which he had received from the savages. Putnam speaks of him thus :

"Captain Morris returned [to Fort Detroit] some time ago [September 17th] and was much abused, and stripped, and whipped, and threatened to be tomahawked, but had his life spared in case he would return."

Captain King's adventures and his speech to the Indian allies on his return to Sandusky, are now related in Putnam's letter :

"Captain Thomas King and three of the Kanawawas [Caughnawagas] proceeded. This Captain King is one of the chiefs of the Oneida Castle; and about ten days ago King came into Detroit and had left all the Kanawawas, who gave out for want of provisions and could not travel; he supposed they all perished in the woods. And three days ago [October 4th] he arrived here [Sandusky], and yesterday he had a conference with the Indians; and when all assembled he made a speech to them. After some talk with them, he expressed himself in this manner :

"'Friends and Brothers: I am now about to acquaint you with facts too obvious to deny. I have been, since I left you, to Monsieur Pontuck's [Pontiac's] camp, and waited on him to see if he was willing to come in and make peace with our brothers, the English. He asked me what I meant by all that, saying, "You have always encouraged me to carry on the war

against the English, and you said the only reason you did not join me last year was the want of ammunition, and as soon as you could get ammunition you would join me.”””

The remainder of King's speech at Sandusky is reported by Putnam, in the third person :

“King said [that he told Pontiac that] there was nothing in it [Pontiac's claim that the Six Nations were hostile to the English], at which [statement by King] Pontuck [Pontiac] produced six belts of wampum, that he had had the last year from the Six Nations and [Pontiac] said, ‘The English are so exhausted they can do no more, and one year's war, well pushed, will drive them into the sea.’”

The letter mentions next how King, after telling the Indian allies at Sandusky about this visit to Pontiac, paused in his speech, and, resuming, accused them of treachery :

“King then made a stop for some time [after which he added], ‘Brothers, you know this [the giving of belts to Pontiac] to be true, and you have always deceived me.’”

In describing the effect of these words, Putnam tersely expresses his opinion of alliances with savages:

“At which [accusation by King] the Six Nations were all angry, and this day they are all packing up to go off; and what will be the event I don't know nor don't care, for I have no faith in an Indian peace patched up by presents.”

Notwithstanding their threats, all the Indian allies did not desert. This was more surprising, since they were already greatly disaffected by Bradstreet's treatment of them on this expedition. He was continually rebuking and cursing them. But to continue Putnam's letter to the end :

"Yesterday [October 6th] Captain Peters arrived, which is the last party we had out. Capt. Peters says the Wyandots are all coming in; but the Delawares and the Shawanese are not coming, nor durst they come, for they are afraid that if they should come here Colonel Bouquet will be on their towns and castles. For he has sent to them to come and make peace, and, on the contrary, if they should go to him we should be on them. They intend to be still until Bouquet first comes to them, and then send out and make peace if possible; if not, to fight him as long as they have a man left. But, believe me, they wait to get some advantage of us before they try for peace. Capt. Peters says Bouquet is within thirty miles of their towns, and believes he is to make peace with them; for Colonel Bradstreet had orders from General Gage eight days ago to make no peace with them, but to march and meet Bouquet. But, on calling a council of war and examining the Indians and Frenchmen who were acquainted with the road, it was found to be thirty leagues to travel by land, and nothing to carry any provisions but on men's backs, which, allowing for hindrances, must take forty days to go and come. There are four large rivers to pass, two of which must be crossed with rafts, and that very difficult. Considering the season of the year it was judged impracticable. And here we are, and for what I know not, nor when we are to leave it."

The uncertainty regarding the future movements of the army, which Putnam mentions in closing his letter, continued ten days longer. The general discontent among the soldiers, caused by illness and failing provisions, was increased by the irascibility of Bradstreet. Enraged at being censured by Gage for his manner of making treaties, he was in no mood to carry out the orders to attack the savages living upon the plains of the Scioto. Finally, declaring that the difficulties in reaching that region at the advanced season made it impossible for him to obey the instructions of the Commander-in-chief, and also that it was unnecessary to spend more time upon the fort at the carrying-place of



Sandusky, Bradstreet decided to set out for home with his army without delay.

Having spent the whole of the first day, after leaving Sandusky, in coasting along the southern shore of Lake Erie, the troops, towards evening, were near the mouth of the Rocky River, "wherein,"—so Bradstreet was told—"a thousand boats could lie with safety." But instead of advancing thither for the night, the self-confident commander ordered his men to encamp on a "Sandy Beach." The disastrous folly of choosing so exposed a spot was soon apparent, for a little after dark the weather, which had been "moderate, rather calm," changed and became very threatening. The severity of the storm, which soon began to rage, was increased by snow and sleet. The night was full of excitement and distress. Next morning the tempest continued; yet some of the men set to work repairing such boats as had not been totally wrecked, and other soldiers collected a portion of the baggage and provisions which were scattered along the shore. During the three days that the tempestuous weather lasted Putnam was kept very busy directing some of the repairs occasioned by the damages from the angry surf. By October 21st, the "violent gale" had subsided sufficiently for the army to proceed, but, owing to the fact that many of the boats had been dashed to pieces, some of the provincials and Indians were ordered to make the journey to Niagara on foot. Putnam was with the main army on the lake; and the hardships there were great. At times on the two-weeks' voyage to Fort Erie, the boats were "in danger of filling by a prodigious surf." On account of the limited number of boats, Bradstreet ordered a second detachment to travel by land, and,



being unable to transport all his ammunition, he decided to conceal a portion of it. So there was a midnight enterprise and "several Keggs and Boxes of musket and carbine Ball" were secretly buried on shore.

Putnam still accompanied the main army. While the soldiers were waiting near the mouth of the Grand River for a storm to subside, that they might proceed in their boats, they descried one morning a schooner on the lake, evidently bound for Fort Detroit. The prospect of succour put new heart into the suffering troops, but, alas! their efforts to attract the attention of the passing vessel were all in vain. After days of intense distress, the famishing soldiers finally reached the eastern end of Lake Erie. They hastily disembarked and, with reviving spirits at the prospect of relief, pressed on over the portage road towards Fort Niagara. Faint and deadly fatigued, they arrived there on November 4th. "Some oxen killed for the Troops," writes Montresor, in referring to the feast which was quickly prepared; and now the starving men thankfully regaled themselves. Near the fort three schooners lay anchored, in which the regulars were to sail along the southern side of Lake Ontario to Oswego. The provincials were to take the same route, "in the long boats and bateaux." All the troops embarked on November 8th. On the fourth day after their departure from Fort Niagara they were overtaken by a tempest on this second lake and were again in great peril. One of the schooners was cast away, having lost her rudder, but all on board were saved. Putnam and the provincials had an experience most exciting and hazardous. It was with the greatest difficulty that most of the men reached the shore. Their boats and bateaux were damaged; and there had been the harrowing spectacle of comrades

perishing in the angry waters. "All this night," writes Montresor at the close of his record of the calamitous and heart-sickening 11th of November, "a perfect Tempest with a snow drift, the wind chiefly N. W. and extremely cold."

With as many men as were able, in spite of their sufferings, to travel—Putnam was one of them—Bradstreet set out at once for the Hudson River. The journey thither was a comparatively easy one. The regulars went into winter quarters and the provincials were disbanded. By the first of December, Putnam reached home.

The expedition under Bradstreet was the last warlike enterprise in which Putnam was destined to serve before the days of the American Revolution. Indeed, the war against Pontiac, so far as campaigns and battles were concerned, ended in 1764, for subsequent plots of the hostile chief proved of little avail; and, finally, after he had sued for peace, he was assassinated by a Kasastian Indian, whom an English trader had bribed to commit the deed.





## CHAPTER XII

### THE HONOURED CITIZEN

1765-1772



THE period of Israel Putnam's life which immediately followed his ten years of military experience has been truly characterised by Washington Irving. "Since the peace," says this writer, "he had returned to agricultural life, and was now a farmer at Pomfret, in Connecticut, where the scars of his wounds and the tales of his exploits rendered him a hero in popular estimation." Soon after this "soldier of native growth,"—as Irving calls Putnam,—“seasoned and proved in frontier campaigning,” had been welcomed back by fellow-colonists, his happiness was clouded by heavy sorrow. On January 24, 1765, less than two months since the glad home reunion, death crossed the hero's threshold and bore away his daughter—just passing from girlhood into young womanhood—Elizabeth, seventeen years of age. In the following spring, April 6th, Putnam was again bereaved, this time of his devoted wife Hannah. During their nearly twenty-six years of wedded life ten children in all had been born to them, of whom seven—three sons and four daughters—were living at

the time that the family was left motherless. The youngest child—a son, born on the last day of December,—was now only three months old. He had been named Peter Schuyler. This was in grateful remembrance of the kindness shown Putnam by Colonel Peter Schuyler during the days of captivity at Montreal in 1758.

It would seem that Putnam's affliction was the immediate reason for the greater interest which he took in religious things. Six weeks after the death of his wife, he became a member of the Congregational Church. "Received to full communion 1765 May 19th Col. Israel Putnam" is the record of the action as it appears in the original Brooklyn Parish register. This new relationship strengthened the friendship which already existed between himself and the kind and sympathetic pastor, Rev. Josiah Whitney.

During the next two years Putnam made many needed improvements in cultivating his land ; and he gave, as he had done before the war, particular attention to his fruit trees. An important event of neighbourhood interest at this period was the arrival, in the "Mortlake District," of Colonel Godfrey Malbone, a retired merchant. He was a graduate of King's College, Oxford, and had travelled widely. Having inherited from his father a large estate in Newport, Rhode Island, he had built a country-house there at considerable cost, but no sooner was it finished than it was destroyed by fire. This misfortune, together with his financial embarrassments occasioned by the impending American Revolution, led Malbone, who was a strong loyalist and, therefore, very unpopular, to remove from Newport early in 1766. His reason for coming to Pomfret was that he had already owned, for



many years past, several thousand acres there, most of which land was included in the original Mortlake district. He hoped, in now settling upon and cultivating this large estate in Eastern Connecticut, to suffer less than formerly on account of political troubles. This new townsman cared nothing for the Pomfret people in general ; indeed he kept aloof from them as much as possible. But to the farmer-soldier whose property adjoined his own he took a liking at once, for he found that this neighbour's horizon had been widened beyond local affairs by acquaintance with many of the best officers in the British army and by a remarkably adventurous career. So, in spite of Malbone's bluntness of manner and his indifference to Pomfret's interests, a fellowship was soon established between himself and the friendly, open-hearted Putnam, who was ever ready with personal reminiscence and good-humoured repartee.

Although the two men maintained pleasant personal relationships, their " verbal skirmishes " were not infrequent, for they differed greatly in their opinions of the measures adopted by Parliament for raising money to defray the expenses of the French and Indian War, and to support, as a defence against the savages on the frontiers, a standing army in America. Unlike Malbone, who attempted to defend the policy of the Crown, Putnam was imbued with democratic principles and expressed himself strongly against that which seemed to him to be an encroachment on the rights of free-born Englishmen. His positive convictions were a result not only of his sturdy common sense, but also of his " occasional reading." Moreover, he was deeply sensible of the fact that the chartered government of Connecticut gave him and every fellow-inhabitant of



the colony a special right to protest against royal interference. The attempts of the British Ministry, after the fall of the French power in Canada, to revive and enforce in America such revenue laws as the Navigation Act and the Molasses Act, were obnoxious enough to most of the colonists, for the chief object of King George III. and his advisers evidently was to regulate commerce in the New World so that the greatest gain might accrue to the mother country. It was not strange, therefore, that the indignation of Americans, who resented all arbitrary requisitions, was still further aroused when they learned that Parliament intended to levy a direct tax upon them in order that they might help pay off the war debt. This proposed measure, the Stamp Act, which required all legal documents to bear stamps, was opposed by the colonists, not because they were unwilling to aid in removing the national financial burdens, but because they recognised the injustice of being taxed by a legislative body in which they were not represented. Vigorous were the remonstrances of the different assemblies against this method of raising money ; and Putnam's own colony took a leading part by sending her memorial to England, stating the "Reasons why the British colonies in America should not be charged with Internal Taxes." Despite the efforts to prevent the passage of the hated law, Parliament voted in its favour and, on March 22, 1765, it received the King's assent.

When the news of the enactment of the Stamp Act reached America, there was a great outburst of indignation. Months of intense agitation followed. While James Otis and Samuel Adams, in the North, and Patrick Henry, in the South, by speeches and resolutions, were arousing the people to action, and while

the different colonies were arranging for a general congress in order to decide upon some concerted course for resisting the arbitrary measures which subverted their rights, Putnam, who had joined one of the secret societies of workingmen known as "Sons of Liberty," was taking a leading part as a champion of freedom in Connecticut. We find him riding from town to town through the eastern part of the colony to see what number of men could be relied upon to make an armed resistance to the obnoxious law. Reports of his patriotic energy spread to New York, as we learn from a British officer who was stationed there.

"By advice from Connecticut," writes this contemporary, "matters are arrived to greater lengths than in any other province, having already provided themselves with a magazine for Arms, Ammunition, &c., and 10,000 men at the shortest warning for opposing the Stamp Act, &c., all under the Command of a Connecticut man, called Col. Putnam, one that has received his Majesty's money, having been employ'd during the War as a Provincial Colonel."\*

Having so successfully stirred up the inhabitants of his own colony to oppose a measure, the principle of which was a greater insult to Connecticut than to any other colony except Rhode Island, Putnam sent messages to the Sons of Liberty in Massachusetts, New York, and elsewhere, that he "would assist them with the [Connecticut] Militia to the utmost lives and fortunes to prevent the Stamp Act being enforced."

At this period of the excitement, Putnam was suddenly disabled by "an accident." Owing to this misfortune, the details of which have not come down to us, he was prevented for a while from taking any further

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\* *Collections of the New York Historical Society*, 1881, p. 355.

part in the general uprising. We can easily understand how the spirit of the impetuous patriot chafed at being kept at Pomfret while a great body of yeomen from Eastern Connecticut, whom he had expected to lead in person, started in September to meet Jared Ingersoll of New Haven, the stamp agent, who, it was reported, was on his way to Hartford to execute the duties of his office. Before Parliament passed the Stamp Act, Ingersoll had been sent to England to protest against the bill, but, after its enactment, so little did he realise the political ferment at home that he consented to serve as the distributor of the stamped paper in his own colony. Putnam must have enjoyed a hearty laugh when he heard how Ingersoll was intercepted on his approach to Hartford, how he was compelled to mount a table and read his resignation, which was already prepared for him, how he was made to shout three times, "Liberty and property," and how, in continuing his journey, as he rode on his white horse, escorted by the great cavalcade of farmers and freeholders, he was heard to remark that he now understood the meaning of that passage in the Book of Revelation which describes "Death on a pale horse and hell following him."

Although this Connecticut affair ended in such good humour that Ingersoll himself could indulge in pleasantries, many of the opponents of the British Government were ready to act in a more violent manner. The Sons of Liberty declared that they would "fight up to their knees in blood rather than suffer the Stamp Act to be put in force." The agents who had in their possession the stamps destined for Connecticut dared not send them thither, one reason being the "report of a conversation" which reached them in the late autumn of

1765 from that colony. Putnam had recovered sufficiently from his recent injury to go to Hartford, and no sooner had he arrived there than he was delegated by the Sons of Liberty to wait, with two others of their number, on Governor Thomas Fitch, who was inclined to submit to the royal will.

“The questions of the Governor and the answers of Putnam,” says Humphreys, who is our authority for the story of this interview, “will serve to indicate the spirit of the times. After some conversation the Governor asked, ‘what he should do if the stamped paper should be sent to him by the King’s authority?’ Putnam replied, ‘Lock it up until we [Sons of Liberty] shall visit you again.’ ‘And what will you do then?’ ‘We shall expect you to give us the key of the room in which it is deposited; and, if you think fit, in order to screen yourself from blame, you may forewarn us upon our peril not to enter the room.’ ‘And what will you do afterwards?’ ‘Send it safely back again.’ ‘But what if I should refuse admission?’ ‘In such case your house will be levelled with the dust in five minutes.’”

Putnam’s bold attitude, not only on this occasion, but also during the winter, helped to keep at high pitch the spirit of resistance and to foil the attempts of the stamp agents to enforce the law. The Sons of Liberty, who assembled at Canterbury, Connecticut, in March, 1766, chose him and Hugh Ledlie as the Windham County Committee to correspond with members of the secret organisation in the neighbouring colonies, in order to encourage firm and united action in opposing the Stamp Act. When delegates from the Sons of Liberty in every town in Connecticut met at Hartford in the same spring, Putnam was made chairman of a committee of eight who were appointed to carry on a similar correspondence.

The people of Pomfret, proud of the recognised



leadership of their townsman, and knowing the importance of his influence in the colonial legislature, elected \* him as one of their two representatives in 1766, his colleague being Jonathan Dresser. The members of the General Assembly were gathering at Hartford for the spring session of that year, when news arrived from England which was hailed with unbounded joy throughout the colonies. The Stamp Act, after fierce debate in Parliament, had been repealed. With enthusiastic delight, Putnam joined his fellow-legislators in requesting "his Honour the Governor to consider of and prepare an humble, dutiful and loyal Address" of thanks to the King and also "to return the most ardent and grateful thanks of this Assembly to all those who have distinguished themselves as the friends and advocates of the British Colonies in America." At Hartford, on Friday, May 23rd, Connecticut's "day for public Thanksgiving" because of the "beneficial repeal of the late Stamp Act," Putnam must have entered fully into the spirit of the "happy occasion," a day which was not only "religiously observed" but also celebrated by the ringing of bells, the display of colours on the shipping in the river, illuminations, and the firing of cannon. The General Assembly adjourned on May 30th, for, the quarrel with the King having been made up, nothing of special importance came before them to prolong the session. Moreover, most of the members, being farmers, were eager to get home for the summer's work.

Soon after his return to Pomfret, Putnam was again the unfortunate victim of accident. Indeed, he met with two mishaps at this period. His right hand had

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\* *Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut*, vol. xii,



scarcely healed, after the "loss of the first joint of the thumb" when a more serious hurt befell him, "the compound fracture of his right thigh"; "that thigh," Humphreys adds, "being rendered nearly an inch shorter than the left, occasioned him ever after to limp in his walk." When the time drew near for the October meeting of the General Assembly at New Haven, Putnam, despite the difficulties of the journey thither for one just recovering from a badly injured leg, ventured to go; and there, as also three months later at Hartford, we find him representing Pomfret. In 1767, at both the May and October sessions, he was again a representative. His town associate this year was Col. Ebenezer Williams instead of Jonathan Dresser.

On June 3, 1767, a little more than two years after the death of his wife Hannah, Putnam was again united in marriage. This second wife was Mrs. Deborah Lothrop Gardiner, widow of John Gardiner, the fifth proprietor of Gardiner's Island (now a part of the township of Easthampton, Suffolk Co., N. Y.), to whom she had been married nine years before his death, which occurred in 1764. By her first husband, Rev. Ephraim Avery, pastor of Brooklyn Parish, who died in 1754, she had a son Ephraim, at this time a clergyman of the Church of England. Her daughter and son, Hannah and Septimus, by her husband Gardiner, were now respectively nine and seven years old.

The marriage of Putnam to Madame Gardiner

"gave new dignity to his social position," so writes Miss Larned, in her interesting annals of Windham County, "bringing him into connection with many prominent families, and with that ecclesiastic element so potent in Connecticut at this period. Mrs. Putnam had a large circle of friends and much social experience. Her husband was the most popular man of the

day. Their hospitable home drew throngs of visitants. Every soldier, passing through Windham County would go out of his way to call on his beloved Colonel. Relatives, friends, travelling ministers, distinguished strangers, and gushing patriots came in such numbers that their entertainment became very burdensome. A Virginian Jefferson would submit to such an invasion, though it made him bankrupt; a Yankee Putnam could contrive to turn it into profit or at least save himself from ruin. Finding that his estate could not support such an excessive outlay, Putnam met the emergency with one of his sudden strokes, removed his residence to the Avery estate on Brooklyn Green and opened his house for general public accommodation." \*

This change in Putnam's home was made more practicable by the fact that his son Israel, twenty-seven years of age, who had recently married Sarah Waldo of Pomfret, was glad to set up housekeeping at the old homestead and carry on the work of the farm. Hannah, Putnam's eldest daughter, already had a home of her own, for she was the wife of an enterprising young man of the town, John Winchester Dana, who, a few years later, removed to the New Hampshire Grants and became an early settler of Pomfret, Vermont. Putnam's young daughters, Mehitabel, Mary, and Eunice, seem to have divided their time in living in their brother Israel's family and at the home at the "Green," while the other children, Daniel and little Peter, like their step-mother's son and daughter, were permanent members of the household at the latter place.

On a tree in front of his new home Putnam hung a tavern-sign which is in existence.† This "token of

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\* Ellen D. Larned, *History of Windham County, Connecticut*, vol. ii., p. 6.

† This tavern-sign is now kept in the rooms of the Connecticut Historical Society at Hartford.



PUTNAM'S SIGN.

FROM ORIGINAL TAVERN SIGN NOW KEPT IN  
ROOMS OF CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY, HARTFORD, CONN.



rest and good cheer for the weary wayfarer" was quaintly yet correctly described by William Cutter, many years ago :

"It represents General Wolfe in full uniform, his eye fixed in an expression of fiery earnestness upon some distant object, and his right arm extended in emphatic gesture, as if charging on the foe or directing some other important movement of his army. The sign seems to have fared hardly in one respect, being plentifully sprinkled with shot-holes."

It is easy to picture to ourselves Israel Putnam as the host of an old-time inn. Large and stout in figure, with round, good-natured face and hospitable manner, he was the typical landlord, heartily welcoming his guests and entertaining them with tales of his varied experiences, his numerous adventures on land and water, and hairbreadth escapes from fire and sword. This tavern, with its distinguished host and equally cordial hostess, became one of the best-known gathering-places in Eastern Connecticut, and was associated with many an interesting incident in Revolutionary days. Around the large hearthstone were discussed the vital questions of the colonial crisis that stirred the soul of every ardent patriot. Putnam's tavern was a centre, also, for news of local interest; because here, as at other inns in the olden days, were posted notices of town meetings, of elections, of new laws, and notices of administration, as well as bills of sales, of auctions, and records of transfers. The inn was, indeed, an "original business exchange," and the genial Putnam found much social enjoyment in the intercourse with the neighbours and townspeople who flocked to the tavern for information in regard to local affairs as well as the matters of wider importance. The arrival and



departure of the coaches loaded with travellers held a high place among the chief events in the village. Many a merry scene there was in the winter, too, when sleighs dashed up to the cheerful tavern entrance. Landlord and landlady were ready with their greeting, and soon all the new guests were in full enjoyment of the thrifty, homelike comforts.

The position of innkeeper in Old New England was one of eminent respectability, and it was as true of Putnam at Pomfret as of the Enfield landlord of whom John Adams wrote: "he was the great man of the town, their representative as well as tavern keeper." William Gordon, the contemporary of Putnam, makes this interesting mention of the hero and his position as tavern keeper :

"Col. Putnam served with the Connecticut troops under Amherst in the last war. By his courage and conduct he secured to himself a good share of reputation. When peace commenced he returned to the civil line of life. Of late he has occupied a tavern with a farm annexed to it. Such a junction is frequent in New England, and the occupation not at all inconsistent with a Roman character." \*

It was in 1763, soon after Putnam returned from the Havana campaign, that the Pomfret people chose him as one of their selectmen. Twice afterwards—in 1765 and 1771—he was elected to this office of local importance, which was bestowed only upon persons of "wisdom and uprightness." The old records show that he was made moderator of the town-meeting in 1769, and that he served the next year, with Seth Paine and Samuel Williams, on the committee appointed to superintend the rebuilding of "Danielson's Bridge" across

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\* *History of the Independence of the United States.*

the Quinebaug River. Other local affairs there were with which Putnam's name is associated during this period—such as laying out new roads, re-arranging school-districts, engaging schoolmasters and collecting taxes. When the Pomfret farmers found it necessary to take concerted action to prevent further depredations by their common enemy, the crows, they voted "to give bounty of sixpence on each crow's head and two pence on each young crow's head that shall be killed," and for several successive years "Col. Israel Putnam was chosen to receive the crows' heads."

In ecclesiastical affairs, too, Putnam had a part. He was one of the four "messengers" or lay deputies who met with three ministers in council, on November 2, 1770, at Canterbury, and gave their assent to the organisation of the "Westminster Society" in the western part of that town. In the Brooklyn Parish or Society to which he belonged, Putnam was one of the most active advocates for a new meeting-house to replace the old one, which, with its shaky timbers, patched roof, and boarded windows, was in a very dilapidated condition. The doughty Godfrey Malbone, unwilling to pay his share of the money needed for the construction of the new "schism shop," as he called it, attempted to defeat the parish plans. Finding his efforts unsuccessful, he determined to establish, in Pomfret, public worship according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England, of which he was a member. Thus he hoped not only to obtain exemption from additional taxation, but also to aid the loyalist cause by maintaining the services of the Established Church of the country to which the colony was subject. He found some followers in this movement, and soon set carpenters to work building a church in his part of

the town, at a distance of about a mile and a half from the Green.\*

Meanwhile the Brooklyn people, incited to renewed activity by the opposition of Colonel Malbone, took definite steps in regard to their own edifice. The location chosen for it was a few rods south-east of the old meeting-house, and nearly opposite Putnam's tavern. The building, when finished, was described as "a very genteel meeting-house." It was of the old New-England type, large and plain. The exterior was painted white, and the spire was a landmark to the country around. In the recorded details of this important local enterprise Putnam's name occupies a conspicuous place for faithfulness in the general oversight of the work. With money received by bequest from Joseph Scarborough, a bell—a source of great pride to the community—was purchased and hung in the steeple just before the new meeting-house was used for the first time. In such high repute was a bell-ringer and sexton in those days, that only the most honoured citizen was deemed worthy of serving in that position. It was for this reason that the parish took the following action on September 28, 1772 :

"Voted that Col. Putnam take care of the new meeting-house and ring the bell at the price of three pounds the year ensuing."

It was decided at that time that the bell should be

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\* It is an interesting fact that, in after years, when local religious prejudices had in large measure passed away, Putnam's sons, Israel and Daniel, became devoted Churchmen and earnest supporters of the services which Colonel Malbone had been instrumental in starting. The old Trinity Church is still standing in Brooklyn, Conn. So is also the meeting-house which Putnam helped to build.

rung on "Sabbaths, Fasts, Thanksgivings and at Lectures as is customary at other places where they have bells, also to ring it at 12 o'clock at noon and 9 at night."

The following winter, while Putnam was away from home on the Southern trip which is described in the next chapter, Pastor Whitney took his place as bell-ringer, for the minister was considered the only fit person to perform the duties of this responsible and honoured position during the absence of the Colonel himself.





## CHAPTER XIII

### A MILITARY ADVENTURER

1772-1773



FOR nearly ten years General Phineas Lyman had been in England, attempting to obtain a grant of land from the British Government for the provincial soldiers who had survived the French and Indian War. Numerous obstacles, including a change of ministry, had disappointed him again and again in his efforts until he became broken in mind as well as in spirit. In 1772, however, so confident was Lyman of having secured at last the long-desired object, that he returned to America; and in November of that year the "Company of Military Adventurers," an association "composed," as the old records say, "chiefly of such as had been officers and soldiers during the preceding war," met at Hartford, Connecticut, to hear his report. He stated that "an order had passed the King in Council authorising the Governor of West Florida to grant lands in that province to the provincials in the same proportions as had been provided for His Majesty's regular troops."

"Lyman brought no document on the subject," writes Rufus Putnam, who was present at the Hartford gathering, "but his



report was so far relied on, that the meeting voted to explore the lands, and for that purpose appointed a Committee."

"Col. [Israel] Putnam, Capt. [Roger] Enos, Mr. Thaddeus Lyman and myself," he adds, "were the Exploring Committee."

The members of the Exploring Committee were to sail from New York on board the sloop *Mississippi*, which was provided by the association of Military Adventurers. Before leaving home for that city, Israel was joined by his kinsman and former comrade-in-arms, who, like himself, had been chosen to go South. Rufus Putnam was living on a farm at Brookfield, Massachusetts, which he had purchased soon after the close of the French and Indian War. For several years past he had devoted his spare time to the study of surveying, in which he had become very proficient, and it was because of the special service which he could render in making a plan of the lands when they were being reconnoitred, that he had been appointed on the Committee.

On the arrival of Rufus, the Colonel, with his son Daniel, now a lad of thirteen years, whom he was to take with him South, was ready to set out at once from Pomfret. The journey was made on horseback to Norwich, and from there in a sloop across Long Island Sound and down the East River. On the day that he reached New York, Israel Putnam began a diary\*—a veritable literary puzzle, in its naïve disregard of all rules of punctuation and spelling. He tells of the dangerous approach to New York and how the time was spent after reaching there :

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\* This diary was written by Putnam on the blank pages of the Orderly Book of the Havana Campaign, now in the possession of Charles Otis Thompson of Pomfret, Conn.

"Sunday y<sup>e</sup> 20 [of December, 1772]—pas[s]ed heal gait [Hell Gate] and had all like to have ben lost by reason of a bad pilot but got through Wel—arived at New york about 12 aclock—in ye aftornone Went to hear Doctor rogos [Rev. Dr. John Rodgers, pastor of the Brick Presbyterian Church] preach

"Monday y<sup>e</sup> 21—Cap<sup>t</sup> Laidley and Cap<sup>t</sup> Godrich Sat about rigeng and Loding y<sup>e</sup> vesel.

"tusday y<sup>e</sup> 22—it proved varey raney so that thare was but leatel to be don

"Wednesday y<sup>e</sup> 23—good weathor all hands at worke preparing the vesel

"thorsday 24—varey raney and Durtey weathor but leatel Don."

The New Englander was unaccustomed to the holiday observances by the inhabitants of this city of Dutch customs and traditions :

"friday y<sup>e</sup> 25 [of December]—crismos day—Nothing to be Don hear—not so much as is ginoreley one [on] Sunday in this part of y<sup>e</sup> World.

"Satorday y<sup>e</sup> 26—hollow Days [holidays] heare."

The departure from New York was not until two weeks later. During the intervening time the Colonel made brief entries in his diary as follows :

"Sunday y<sup>e</sup> 27 [of December]—this Day weant to y<sup>e</sup> oald english Church [Trinity Church] to hear M<sup>r</sup> Ahmodey [the Rev. Samuel Auchmuty, the rector]—Dined with M<sup>r</sup> William Halet

"monday 28—had a good Day to work in—all hands busy at work

"tusday 29—purchased 4 swinds [swine] and hired 4 low horns [cattle] for y<sup>e</sup> voige [voyage]

"Wednesday y<sup>e</sup> 30—varey weat and raney but leatel to be don

"thursday y<sup>e</sup> 31—the men employed it taken in goods for y<sup>e</sup> voige

has had taking in goods for 4 weeks in weather  
Sunday of 3 to hear me Lancaster in morning  
this day went to hear me Lancaster in morning  
and this Sunday in evening had heavy flood swamp  
Monday of 11  
this day was very pleasant the all employed in taking  
and hauling the coal

Tuesday of 12  
this day having weather with L. H. D.

Wednesday of 13  
this day all hands at work taking in

Thursday of 14  
this day having good day and had rain  
all completed

Friday of 15  
this day completed the stock of the



"friday y<sup>e</sup> forst of Jenauary 1773—this Day no work don—  
went to Church—Dined at M<sup>r</sup> Petor Vandevort marchant

"Satorday y<sup>e</sup> 2—this day taking in goods for y<sup>e</sup> voige—good  
weathor

"Sunday y<sup>e</sup> 3—this day weant to hear M<sup>r</sup> Leavenston [Rev.  
Dr. John Henry Livingston, pastor of the North Dutch Re-  
formed Church] in y<sup>e</sup> morning and M<sup>r</sup> Leadley [Rev. Dr.  
Archibald Laidie of the Middle Dutch Reformed Church] in  
y<sup>e</sup> evening—two varey Good sarmons

"Monday y<sup>e</sup> 4—this day was varey pleasant—the men all im-  
ployed in loding and painting the vesal

"tusday y<sup>e</sup> 5 this Day Lowring weat weathor but letel Don

"Wednesday y<sup>e</sup> 6—good weathor—all hands at work taking  
in stores

"thorsday y<sup>e</sup> 7—this was a varey good Day and had almost  
all completed

"friday y<sup>e</sup> 8 1773—this day compleated the whole of the  
cargo

"Satorday y<sup>e</sup> 9 of Jenauary—had all things one bord and  
ready for saling But the wind was so much to y<sup>e</sup> south it would  
not Do."

At last, on Sunday, January 10, 1773, about eleven  
o'clock in the morning, the Committee of Military  
Adventurers on board the sloop *Mississippi* were out-  
ward bound. During the next two weeks Israel Put-  
nam made a brief record each day of the wind and,  
when an observation was possible, of the latitude.  
Unfavourable weather delayed at times the passage, but  
fortunately no heavy storms were encountered. On  
Monday, January 25th, the sloop crossed the Tropic of  
Cancer, and a few days later was near Turk's Island  
among the Bahama Islands, sailing for a short time in  
company with a schooner which was wrecked soon  
afterwards on a reef of rocks in that vicinity. On  
Saturday, January 30th, the *Mississippi* entered the  
fine harbour of St. Nicholas' Mole on the north-west



extremity of the island of Haiti. The sloop remained here four days, and during that time the passengers went on shore several times. The place was an important trading station, there being at that time about eighty vessels in the harbour, which number, Israel Putnam was told by some of the inhabitants, "was not above half so many as is usually here."

In proceeding southward, on February 4th, the voyagers saw on their left the rocky coast of Haiti, which rose in level plains or ledges. On the right, the view of Cuba, which Israel Putnam mentions in his diary, must have vividly reminded both Captain Roger Enos and himself of the perilous experiences ten years before, when they were wrecked off that island in the dreadful Havana campaign. On Sunday, February 7th, the sloop neared the north coast of Jamaica, and, passing by the ports of Saint Ann and Martha Brae, reached Montego Bay the next morning about eleven o'clock. After dinner the passengers went on shore. Their visit to one of the Jamaica plantations in the vicinity was disturbed by a savage dog. In the canine encounter Israel unceremoniously fell into a rum vat. He tells the incident in his characteristic style:

"waited on y<sup>e</sup> mannegor of the plantation who tre[a]ted ous very hamseley [handsomely]—walked with ous—Shewed ous all y<sup>e</sup> Works and the mills to grind ye Cain and as we went in thare was a dog atacked y<sup>e</sup> manegor and in y<sup>e</sup> figh[t] I tumbled into won of the vats that was full of Liquer to make rum of—shifted all my Cloths and went on borde"

The next day Israel made this entry :

"tusday y<sup>e</sup> 9 of february 1773—"this morning went one Shore we that had had the small pox and non eals [no one else] for we found it was vary thick all over y<sup>e</sup> town—went back to

the plantation—got my cloths—Bough[t] som fruit but it was vary hard to be got by reson it was not sunday—about 2 a Clock we went one borde—Dinned—Waied ancor and took our Leave of monte go bay ”

From Jamaica the course was north-west towards Cape San Antonio, Cuba. The weather became oppressively hot and a calm retarded the progress of the vessel. On reaching Cape San Antonio after a week of slow sailing, a bargain for tortoises with some Spaniards, who came out in a canoe, was interrupted by the approach of a schooner which Captain Goodrich feared was a guard-coaster. The crew of the strange vessel secured the tortoises which the Military Adventurers themselves had expected to purchase. The sloop *Mississippi* was now headed directly for Pensacola, Florida, but contrary winds and stormy weather were soon encountered. It required ten days to reach that destination. Among the officers stationed at Pensacola, which was then the centre of English interests on the Gulf shore, were two old associates of Israel Putnam in the French and Indian War,—General Frederick Haldimand and Major John Small. The latter was the intimate friend whose life he afterwards saved at the battle of Bunker Hill. The new arrivals were hospitably received. To their surprise and disappointment, however, the Military Adventurers found that no royal instructions had been received.

“Governor Chester and his Council,” writes Rufus Putnam, “treated us in the most obliging manner; but, alas, no order for granting Lands to the provincials had arrived; this was a mortifying circumstance; however the possibility of its yet arriving, with the proposal made for granting Lands to the company on terms within the power of the Governor and Council induced the Committee to resolve on proceeding on

the business of reconnoitring the country on the Mississippi and to make such Surveys as we might think proper."

Two weeks after their arrival at Pensacola, the Military Adventurers set sail in their sloop to explore the Mississippi River as far north as the Yazoo, trusting that during their absence the orders from the King for the land grants would be received by Governor Chester. After going a short distance they were obliged to drop anchor on account of the contrary wind. Israel Putnam improved the opportunity for his favourite pastime by going ashore to hunt. He notes how he took a walk into the woods, got a shot at a fine buck, wounded him but could not catch him, and came back tired and hungry. The wind shifted on March 18th; then the sloop got well under way and was soon out of sight of land. Four days later the Military Adventurers, after considerable difficulty, entered the mouth of the Mississippi. On the way up the river Israel, with a companion, made several reconnoissances in a whaleboat. On one of these trips he shot three alligators. His diary abruptly ends with a record of his visit on Sunday, March 28th, to a hospitable French settler whose plantation bordered the river. Information in regard to the remainder of the expedition is found in the writings of Rufus Putnam. From him we learn that New Orleans was reached on March 30th. More than a week was spent at this chief port on the river. Then Captain Goodrich, for reasons which were probably connected with Spanish restrictions on navigation northward, "refused to proceed any further with the sloop." The Military Adventurers, therefore, embarked in a bateau April 8th. They made such good progress that three days later they reached an Acadian settlement, seventy-one miles above New Orleans.

Among these people, who, the chronicler notes, "were removed by the English from Nova Scotia," the members of the exploring party tarried a whole day and were treated with hospitality, listening with interest to the stories of innumerable hardships and sad experiences which the exiles told. In advancing farther up the Mississippi, several Indian villages and French settlements were passed. On April 26th the historic spot, Fort Rosalie at Natchez, was reached.

The Military Adventurers had now advanced nearly four hundred miles up the current of the mighty river, and it was with great interest that they neared the region where they intended to make a special reconnaissance. Having left Natchez Wednesday afternoon, April 28th, they advanced by boat nearly fifty miles to the mouth of the Bayou Pierre. They went up this tributary seventeen miles to the Forks, and there they marked a tree "for commencing our Location." Then they returned down the Bayou Pierre and proceeded up the Mississippi, the same day, nine miles, to the Great Gulf, where Thomas James, an Indian trader, had settled. Three miles above was the Big Black River; and on Thursday, after the explorers had rowed past that stream, two of their number, Israel Putnam and Thaddeus Lyman, set off by land, with a Choctaw Indian as guide, for the Walnut Hills, between fifty and sixty miles distant, which formed a portion of the great bluff bounding the valley of the Mississippi on the East. The rest of the party made their way to the same hills by water, and on their arrival there, Saturday evening, the 8th, met "the gentlemen who came by Land" from whom they learned that the route was through a flat country and cypress swamps, that the cane brakes were so thick it



was not possible to examine the land from the path. After reaching the high grounds of the Yazoo, Israel Putnam and his companion, who had made their way thither across the country while the other men went around by boat, wished to make a further reconnoissance overland, but the threatening attitude of their Choctaw guide prevented them from carrying out all their plans. The Indian was unable to state his reasons in words, for he was as ignorant of the English language as the men whom he had been guiding were of the Choctaw speech. His gesticulations and other efforts to make his meaning known proved unintelligible. Later, through Trader James as interpreter, he explained that he had met two chiefs on the Yazoo River who forbade his conducting any of the party over the proposed route to the Big Black River.

Under date of Thursday, May 13th, Rufus Putnam records :

"Colo. Putnam & Mr. Lyman & myself Set out by Land, more perticularly to examin the high Lands, Stretching from the old French Station [on the Yazoo River], to the Walnut hills; we Steared our course as neer the hills as possible on account of the Cane brakes. Saw Several Small Streams issuing from the high Lands, & land very rich; in the afternoon we pursued one of these Streams to Some distance, when we were taken up by a mighty Cane Brake, here Colo. Putnam climbed a tree & discovered high Land at about 100 rods distent which we were two hours in gaining, on account of the difficulty of giting through the Cane . . . we returned part of the way down the hill & Camped by a very fine Spring."

After their return to Trader James's plantation, the same three Military Adventurers started on another trip :

"Monday May 17th. Colo. Putnam, Mr. Lyman & myself,"



says Rufus Putnam, "Set out to explore the Lands on the Big Black . . . Thursday May 20, we returned down the river to Mr. James' where we found the Second Chief of Chaetau Nation waiting for us."

This Indian chief was "Mingo-oma, whose name is also Snake-head." He showed the explorers a commission which he had once received from Governor Chester, granting certain rights in this region to the Choctaws. The chief now declared, through Interpreter James, that his nation would permit "no white people" to settle above the Big Black River.

On account of the savage hostility to their reconnoitring northward, the party proceeded down the Mississippi, and on Wednesday, June 2nd, arrived at Manchac, having on their way thither spent "considerable time in exploring the Lands near the river on the English or West Florida Side." A few miles below Manchac they found their sloop, which had advanced nearly one hundred miles above New Orleans to meet them. Owing to various delays, a whole month was spent in sailing back to Pensacola. Here the Military Adventurers were disappointed again in regard to the land-grants. No letters had arrived from England authorising the appropriations. The Exploring Committee succeeded, however, in obtaining from Governor Chester and his Council certain rights for provincial veterans to settle on the lands which they had reconnoitred. Then they made preparations to return to the North, and on Thursday, July 15th, the sloop *Mississippi* was homeward bound. After a disagreeable voyage of three weeks, the passengers reached New York in safety on Friday, August 6th. "Col. Putnam, his son Daniel and myself," writes Rufus Putnam the next day, "took passage in a sloop

for Norwich, but on our way sprung the mast, and with some difficulty arrived at New London on Tuesday, the 10th." He adds :

"Wednesday August 11th—quit the sloop & took passag in a Row boate for Norwich

"Thursday August 12th—came on Horseback to Colo. Putnams & Friday 13th arrived at my own house in Brookfield."

Although Israel Putnam did not again visit the Mississippi, he was one of the provincial officers who made preliminary arrangements for cultivating a tract of land on that river, but all such plans were put to an end by the outbreak of the American Revolution with its momentous issues.





## CHAPTER XIV

### AN ARDENT PATRIOT

1773-1774



VER since the repeal of the Stamp Act, George III. of England had been eager to re-assert his authority in America. The opportunity came when his friend, Charles Townshend, Chancellor of the Exchequer, secured the passage by Parliament, in 1767, of revenue bills which upheld the royal policy of taxation without representation. Lord North, who succeeded Townshend and, in 1770, became Prime Minister of England, attempted to enforce the tyrannical laws, but the resistance of the colonies led him to remove all duties except on tea. The spirit of opposition having been weakened in several colonies by the partial concession, the British Government assisted the East India Company in shipping a quantity of tea to America, but the Massachusetts people, who were among the strongest denouncers of the arbitrary course of the King, adopted a most effectual method of preventing the landing of the cargoes which were intended for Boston. A party of citizens, disguised as Indians, boarded the vessels which had arrived in the

harbour, ripped open the tea-chests and poured the contents into the water.

This incident of the " Boston Tea Party " occurred just four months after Putnam returned in the summer of 1773 from his Southern voyage. Ardent patriot that he was, he thoroughly sympathised with the Massachusetts leaders in their bold defiance of the King. Their course seemed to him justified by the repeated encroachments on colonial rights. This fellow-feeling was further aroused when, in the spring of 1774, came the news that Parliament had passed certain retaliatory acts to punish the Boston men for contempt of the royal authority. The object of the Boston Port Bill was to starve and frighten the rebellious citizens into submission by closing their port and stopping trade ; the Regulating Act disannulled the charter of Massachusetts, destroyed her free government, and provided for a military governor who should have despotic power.

Several years previous, Parliament, regarding Boston as a disorderly town, had sent troops there, but after the Boston Massacre—the tragic collision of March 5, 1770, caused by the unwillingness of the citizens to be treated as a conquered people—the soldiers had been withdrawn to Castle William. Now that retaliatory acts had been enacted, an armed force was again quartered in the city. This harsh measure, together with the revengeful spirit shown by the British Government in the passage of the Port Bill, provoked greater indignation than ever throughout the colonies.

As soon as the law which stopped the trade of Boston went into effect on June 1, 1774, public meetings were held in Connecticut, as elsewhere, to consider the

matter of tendering relief to those who were "suffering in a common cause." So hearty was the response to the suggestion in regard to voluntary contributions that there soon began to flow, from every direction towards Boston, gifts of food and other needed articles as well as money. Committees of Correspondence were appointed in different towns to circulate all important news and to decide upon some concerted course of action in case of emergencies. Brooklyn Parish made Israel Putnam the chairman of its committee, which was composed, besides himself, of Joseph Holland and Daniel Tyler, Jr. These three men prepared a letter for the Boston patriots which was full of glowing sentiment and practical sympathy. Here it is :

"BROOKLYN IN POMFRET,

"August 11th, 1774.

"GENTLEMEN,

"With our hearts deeply impressed with the feelings of humanity towards our near and dear brethren of Boston, who are now suffering under a ministerial, revengeful hand, and at the same time full of gratitude to the patriotic inhabitants, for the noble stand which they have made against all oppressive innovations, and with unfeigned love for all British America, who must, if Boston is subjugated, alternately fall a prey to ministerial ambition, we send you one hundred and twenty-five sheep, as a present from the inhabitants of Brooklyn, hoping thereby you may be enabled to stand more firm (if possible) in the glorious cause in which you are embarked, notwithstanding the repeated, unheard of daring attacks, which the British Parliament are making upon the rights which you ought to enjoy as English-born subjects ; and if so, we shall of consequence contribute our mite towards the salvation of British America, which is all our ambition.

"In zeal in our country's cause, we are exceeded by none ; but our abilities and opportunities do not admit of our being of



that weight in the American scale as we would to God we were.

“ We mean in the first place, to attempt to appease the fire (raised by your committing the India Tea to the watery element as a merited oblation to Neptune) of an ambitious and vindictive minister, by the blood of rams and of lambs ; if that do not answer the end, we are ready to march in the van, and to sprinkle the American altars with our heart’s blood, if occasion should be.

“ The latent seeds of destruction which are implanted in the constitution of almost every state or empire, have grown in England, in these last nine years, with amazing rapidity, and now are mature for harvest ; and ere long we shall see reapers flocking from all parts of Europe, who will sweep their fields with the besom of destruction. This thought occasions a cloud of melancholy to arise in the breast of every descendant from Britain, which is only dissipated by the pleasing prospect every American has before him ! Here we have an unbounded, fertile country, worth contending for with blood ! Here bribery and corruption, which are certain forebodings of a speedy dissolution, are as yet only known by names. To us, ere long, Britain’s glory will be transferred, where it will shine with accumulated brilliancy.

“ We cannot but rejoice with you, on account of the union and firmness of the Continent. The public virtue now exhibited by the Americans, exceeds all of its kind that can be produced in the annals of the Greeks and Romans. Behold them from North and South, from East to West, striving to comfort the town of Boston, both by publishing their sentiments in regard to the present tyrannical administration, and by supporting their poor with provision, who, otherwise, in this present stagnation of business, would have reduced the opulent to a state of penury and despair in a short time.

“ You are held up as a spectacle to the whole world. All Christendom are longing to see the event of the American contest. And do, most notable citizens, play your part manfully, of which, we make no doubt, your names are either to be held in eternal veneration, or execration. If you stand out, your names cannot be too much applauded by all Europe, and all

future generations, which is the hearty desire and wish of us, who are, with utmost respect, your obedient and humble servants.

"ISRAEL PUTNAM,	} Committee of Corre-	
"JOSEPH HOLLAND,		
"DANIEL TYLER, JR.		
		spondence for the Parish of Brooklyn.

"To SAMUEL ADAMS, Esq., Chairman to the Committee of Correspondence, Boston." \*

It was decided that Putnam himself should be the bearer of this letter, and he accordingly set out at once on horseback for Boston, nearly a hundred miles distant, driving before him the flock of sheep, Brooklyn's gift to the distressed town. On reaching Boston, Putnam became the honoured guest of the young physician who had already taken a leading part in championing the colonial cause.

In the postscript to a letter addressed to his bosom friend, Samuel Adams, Dr. Joseph Warren wrote :

"The celebrated Colonel Putnam is now in my house, having arrived, since I subscribed this letter [dated Boston, August 15, 1774], with a generous donation of sheep." †

Putnam remained in Boston several days as Warren's guest. The newspapers, in announcing his presence in town, spoke of him as one of the "greatest military characters of the age," a person whose "bravery and character need no description," for

"he is so well known throughout North America that no words are necessary to inform the public any further concerning him than that his generosity led him to Boston to cherish his oppressed brethren and support them by every means in his power. A fine drove of sheep was one article of comfort he was commissioned to present us with." ‡

\* *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Fourth Series, vol. iv., pp. 50-52.

† *Life and Times of Joseph Warren*, by Richard Frothingham.

‡ *Boston Gazette*, 1774.

One of the most aggressive patriots, Dr. Thomas Young, who, like Warren, was a member of the Boston Committee of Correspondence, was especially cordial in greeting Putnam and found keen delight in the unflinching stand which the Connecticut leader took in defending the colonial rights in arguments with some of the British officers.

"The old hero, Putnam," writes Dr. Young in a letter, August 19th, "arrived in town on Monday, bringing with him one hundred and thirty sheep from the little parish of Brooklyn. He cannot get away, he is so much caressed both by officers and citizens. He has had a long combat with Major Small, in the political way, much to the disadvantage of the latter. He looks fresh and hearty, and, on an emergency, would be as likely to do good business as ever."

A fragment of the conversation to which Dr. Young refers gives us a good idea of the patriotic attitude maintained by Putnam in the "combat" with his friend and former comrade-in-arms :

"Twenty ships-of-the-line and twenty regiments," said Major Small, "may be expected from England in case a submission is not speedily made by Boston."

"If they come," was the bold reply, "I am ready to treat them as enemies."

At the British headquarters on Boston Common Putnam met Lord Percy and Colonel Sheriff. Here he found, too, several officers with whom he had served in the French and Indian War, besides General Thomas Gage himself, who had been appointed military governor of Boston. These old friends, after warmly welcoming Putnam, bantered him about coming down to the fight. Humphreys gives an interesting account of these "amicable interviews." This was the "tenor" of them, he says, as "our hero hath often told me":

“ Being often questioned, ‘ in case the dispute should proceed to hostilities, what part he would really take ? ’ he [Putnam] always answered, ‘ with his country ; and that, let whatever might happen, he was prepared to abide the consequence.’ Being interrogated, ‘ whether he, who had been a witness to the prowess and victories of the British fleets and armies, did not think them equal to the conquest of a country which was not the owner of a single ship, regiment or magazine ? ’ he rejoined, that ‘ he could only say, justice would be on our side, and the event with Providence ; but that he had calculated, if it required six years for the combined forces of England and her colonies to conquer such a feeble country as Canada, it would, at least, take a very long time for England alone to overcome her own widely extended colonies, which were much stronger than Canada ; that when men fought for everything dear, in what they believed to be the most sacred of all causes, and in their own native land, they would have great advantages over their enemies who were not in the same situation ; and that, having taken into view all circumstances, for his own part he fully believed that America would not be so easily conquered by England as those gentlemen seemed to expect.’ Being once, in particular, asked, ‘ whether he did not seriously believe that a well appointed British army of five thousand veterans could march through the whole continent of America ? ’ he replied briskly, ‘ no doubt, if they behaved civilly, and paid well for everything they wanted ’ ;—‘ but,’—after a moment’s pause [he] added—‘ if they should attempt it in a hostile manner (though the American men were out of the question) the women, with their ladles and broomsticks, would knock them all on the head before they had got half way through.’ ”

When Putnam went back to Connecticut, he carried with him a letter in which the Boston Committee of Correspondence gratefully acknowledged the gift which the Brooklyn Parish had sent.

After his return from Boston, Putnam was more than ever—to use Bancroft’s characterisation of him—“ the oracle of all patriotic circles in his neighbourhood.”

He was alert for tidings from the Massachusetts patriots which might make it necessary to go to their assistance with arms ; and he had been at home only a few days when the whole country was thrown into the greatest excitement.



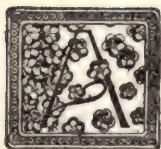




## CHAPTER XV

### WAR'S ALARMS

1774-1775



N uprising in which Putnam had an influential part occurred just three months after the Boston Port Bill went into effect. The immediate origin of this alarm, which caused the patriots in large numbers throughout New Eng-

land to rush to arms and start for Boston to defend their liberties, was the hostile act of General Gage in seizing some powder and cannon. The Massachusetts towns had been accustomed to store their powder, together with that of the province, in the magazine on Quarry Hill, in Charlestown, but, as a precaution against the war which was threatening the towns, took away their supply in August, 1774. When General Gage learned that the ammunition of the province remained there, he decided to secure it by removing it to Castle William in Boston Harbour. Two hundred and sixty men, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Maddison, were accordingly sent to accomplish this object. They embarked in thirteen boats at Long Wharf, Boston, about dawn on the 1st day of September, and passed up Mystic River as far as Temple's Farm (The Ten Hills). There

the soldiers landed within a mile of the powder-house and, having crossed over Winter Hill, conveyed all the powder, consisting of two hundred and fifty half-barrels, from the magazine to their boats, while the detachment which was sent to Cambridge seized two field-pieces there. The British then transported what they had captured to Castle William.

The news of this inroad spread rapidly. A large crowd gathered on Cambridge Common. Many of the patriots wished to use violent measures and recover the powder and cannon, but were urged by Joseph Warren and other influential leaders to disperse quietly. This they did, but forced Lieutenant-Governor Oliver, and other persons who had accepted appointment to office by the King, to resign.

Meanwhile the report of the seizure by the British sped onward, becoming greatly exaggerated on the way, so that by the time it reached Connecticut the rumour was that the enemy's army and fleet had attacked Boston and killed several persons at the first shot. Putnam received the alarm at his home on Saturday morning, September 3rd, at eleven o'clock, and immediately wrote to Captain Aaron Cleveland of Canterbury, urging him to rally all the forces possible and march at once to the scene of bloodshed. Captain Cleveland countersigned the letter and sent it to Norwich, where it arrived at four o'clock on the afternoon of the same day, and was printed in the form of handbills and distributed throughout the town and vicinity. From Norwich Putnam's letter was forwarded southward by Captain John Durkee, and was endorsed by influential patriots at New London, New Haven, and New York. Everywhere it created great excitement.

"Two days ago," wrote a gentleman, on September 7th, from

New York to a friend in Annapolis, "we were alarmed here by the arrival of an Express from a Colonel Putnam, of Connecticut, to the Committee of this City, with intelligence that a certain person was just come to his house from Boston to acquaint him that an affray had happened between the People and the Troops, in which six of the former were killed ; and that when said person left Boston, the Artillery from the Common, and Men-of-War, had been firing upon the Town all the night of the 1st of September. Colonel Putnam, upon this advice, alarmed the whole country, requiring them to arm themselves and take the road to Boston, which they actually did, insomuch that the Post says the roads were covered with people.\*

The response to Putnam's summons to arms was prompt and universal throughout Connecticut. In a letter to Silas Deane, who was one of the Connecticut delegates to the first Continental Congress, which had just assembled at Philadelphia, Titus Hosmer of Wethersfield, Connecticut, describes his own experience in being called out of bed in the early morning by the sheriff, who showed him the message. By this time," says Hosmer, "the people gathered from all quarters like a snowball." Then alluding to the scrawling chirography of Putnam's letter, he adds, "The contents — was something — but, to puzzle any-one, sufficient. The purport was, Boston was in action." †

In passing through other parts of Connecticut on Sunday, September 4th, the letter from Putnam arrived in some of the towns while the people were assembled for worship in the meeting-houses and it was read publicly from the pulpits, the ministers in several

\* Force, *American Archives*, Fourth Series, vol. i., p. 942.

† *Collections of the Connecticut Historical Society*, vol. ii., p.

instances joining members of the congregation in setting off immediately for the place of the supposed engagement. Putnam himself had started for Boston, but before leaving home he had made a facetious thrust at his loyalist neighbour by sending him the following note :

“ Saturday, 12 P.M.

“ DEAR SIR.—I have this minute had an express from Boston that the fight between Boston and Regulars [began] last night at sunset, and the cannon began to and continued playing all night, and they beg for help,—and don't you think *it is time to go?* ”

“ I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,

“ ISRAEL PUTNAM.”

“ To COL. MALBONE.”

Malbone's reply was terse and speedy, “ Go to the Devil! ”

When Putnam was about thirty miles from Pomfret, on his hurried ride towards Boston, he learned that the alarm was false. He accordingly turned back and sent word to the Connecticut forces that they need proceed no farther.

It is impossible to ascertain how many men in all started for Boston. Reports differ, and, as was natural in the excitement of the time, some persons greatly overestimated the number. John Andrews of Boston, writing on September 6, 1774, to William Barrell, a merchant of Philadelphia, placed the number as high as an hundred thousand men, who, he says,

“ were equipt with arms and moving towards us from different parts of the country. The celebrated Colonel Putnam was at the head of fifteen thousand and it's said that five and twenty thousand more were in a body a day's march behind him. . . . It's greatly to their credit that in all the different parties that were collected, and in all their various movements, there was



as much good order and decorum observ'd as when attending church on Sunday.\*

The patriotism which had prompted the Connecticut men to respond so quickly to the alarm, until they were assured by the expresses from Boston that the help of the militia was not needed at present, was also shown at once in the letters of the Committees of Correspondence offering support to Massachusetts in the impending revolution. Putnam and his committee wrote, on September 4th, to Boston :

“ Words cannot express the gladness discovered by every one at the appearance of a door being opened to avenge the many abuses and insults which those foes to liberty have offered to our brethren in your town and province. But for counter intelligence, we should have had forty thousand men well equipped and ready to march this morning. Send a written express to the foreman of this committee when you have occasion for our martial assistance ; we shall attend your summons, and shall glory in having a share in the honour of ridding our country of the yoke of tyranny, which our forefathers have not borne, neither will we ; and we much desire you to keep a strict guard over the remainder of your powder, for that must be the great means, under God, of the salvation of our country.”

The energy of Putnam in calling out the militia did not meet with generous treatment by all the patriots when the alarm proved to be false. Some of them feared that the premature excitement occasioned by “ Putnam’s blundering story,” as Silas Deane called it, might strengthen a sentiment against the attempts to obtain reconciliation with the mother country, and therefore a conflict would be precipitated. The uprising had the effect, at least, of warning Général Gage,

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\* *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, vol. viii., p. 355.



so that he began to fortify Boston Neck. One of the defenders of this British commander said, in an open letter to Peyton Randolph, President of the Continental Congress :

“A Colonel Putnam of Connecticut, with a zeal not according to knowledge, alarmed that and all the Southern Provinces, and the whole country was in motion. Under all these hostile appearances, what was it the duty of a good General to do? Was it not to secure his troops in the best manner he could against the threatened invasion? This his Excellency General Gage did by repairing the old Fortifications at the entrance into the Town, and by throwing up an entrenchment still further from the Town, on each side of the common road.” \*

Nearly two weeks after the false alarm there appeared in the columns of the *New York Gazette and Weekly Mercury* a sarcastic article censuring Putnam for his part in the affair. In reply he wrote a strong open letter, which was originally published, October 7, 1774, in the *Connecticut Gazette* at New London. It vindicates his conduct, and, not being marred by misspelled words—those errors of Putnam were corrected in the old newspaper—it is, with its virile style and classic allusions, a good interpreter of his intelligence and force.

This is the letter in the form in which it has been preserved to us :

AN OPEN LETTER OF ISRAEL PUTNAM EXPLAINING  
AND DEFENDING HIS COURSE AT THE TIME OF  
THE FALSE ALARM IN SEPTEMBER, 1774.

“POMFRET, October 3, 1774.

“In Mr. Gaine’s *New York Gazette*, of the 12th of September, I am called upon to set the affair of my writing a letter to Captain Cleveland in a true light, which was wrote in consequence of intelligence brought me by Captain Keys, on the 3rd

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\* Force, *American Archives*, Fourth Series, vol. i., p. 943.

of September last. Being then at home about my lawful business, said Keys came to my house about eleven o'clock A.M., and informed me that an Express came from Boston to Oxford, who set out from thence on the preceding evening, and brought the alarming tidings contained in my letter herein inserted. The true state of the case, as I have since learned, is as follows :

“ Wilcot, Esquire, of Oxford, hearing the news, posted his son off towards Boston to learn the certainty of the report ; and when he came to Grafton, about thirty-five miles from Boston, he heard a further confirmation of it, and returned immediately back to Oxford, when the said Wilcot, his father, sent him to Dudley, to Carter's Tavern, where one Mr. Clarke, of that town, a trader, happened to be, and he came to his father, Captain Clarke, of Woodstock, who came to said Keys, and on his coming to me with the strongest assurances of the truth and reality of said report, I wrote the following letter to Captain Aaron Cleveland of Canterbury :

“ ‘ Mr. Keys this moment brought us the news that the Men-of-War and Troops began to fire upon the people last night at sunset, at Boston, when a post was immediately sent off to inform the country. He informed that the Artillery played all night, that the people were universally rallying as far as here, and desire all the assistance possible.

“ ‘ The first commencement of hostilities was occasioned by the country's being robbed of their powder, from Boston as far as Framingham ; and when found out, the persons who went to take the perpetrator of the horrid deed (who had fled to the Camp) were immediately fired upon, six of our number were killed the first shot, and a number wounded ; and beg you will rally all the forces you can, and be upon the march immediately for the relief of Boston, and the people that way.

“ ‘ ISRAEL PUTNAM. ’ ”

“ The title of ‘ Lieutenant Colonel of the Connecticut Forces, ’ I did not assume in my said letter, it being inserted in the New York Paper by the Printer's own capricious whim, or to gratify some of his votaries.

“ The above letter is as nearly conformable to the original as I can recollect, not having a copy of it ; by comparing which

with that inserted in said Gaine's Paper, the reader will perceive they somewhat differ. Whether the difference arises from a wrong copy sent forward by Captain Cleveland, or from some other cause, I am not able to determine. I hope the reader will make a proper allowance for incorrectness, when he considers it was wrote in great haste, and the author aimed at nothing but plain matters of fact, as they were delivered to him, not expecting said letter would have been transported through the Continent, subject to the critical inspection of the learned in every Town.

"The writer in Mr. Gaine's Paper of September 10, who styles himself a New-York Freeholder, introduces his piece with a rhetorical picture of the horrors of a civil war; which, though I agree with him that it brings a train of evils along with it, yet when drove to a state of desperation by the oppressive hand of tyranny and the lawless violence of arbitrary power, what people on earth would not be justified, in the eye of right reason and common sense, for the resistance even to the shedding of blood, if the preservation of their liberties demanded it. After having said sufficient to alarm the fears of all those who have a pusillanimity of soul, or rather an infamous desire of screening their Jacobitish principles under the mask of dread of consequences, he ushers in this paragraph with a sneer: 'Colonel Putnam's famous letter, forwarded by special messengers to New York and Philadelphia, and the consequences it produced are very recent and fresh in our memories.' Then, after reciting some part of my letter, he proceeds, 'The evident confusion of ideas in this letter betrays the state of the poor Colonel's mind whilst writing it, and shews he did not possess that calm fortitude which is necessary to insure success in military enterprises.' Paying all due deference to this author's learning, and his undoubted acquaintance with the rules of grammar and criticism, I would beg leave to ask him whether he does not betray a total want of the blessings of humanity, if he supposes, in the midst of confusion, when the passions are agitated with a real belief of thousands of their fellow-countrymen being slain, and the inhabitants of a whole City just upon the eve of being made a sacrifice by the rapine and fury of a merciless Soldiery, and

their City laid in ashes by the fire of the Ships of War, he or any one else could set down under the possession of a calmness of soul becoming a Roman Senator, and attend to all the rules of composition in writing a letter to make a representation of plain matters of fact, under the hieroglyphical similitude of tropes and figures?

“He goes on to cast a censure upon the New England Colonies, saying the above mentioned report ‘has eventually made evident, past all doubt, that many in the New England Colonies are disposed and ripe for the most violent measures.’ This is as gross a falsehood as the Boston alarm, and discovers the evident disposition of the author to cast an odium upon the patriotick sons of New England, whose arms are emblazoned with humanity; who wish to gain a redress of their grievances by the most pacifick and gentle means; but rather than submit to slavery, are determined to drench their swords in blood, and die generously, or live free!—Under whose banners, possibly, this Jesuitical pretender to friendship for the liberties of America and the British Constitution, may be glad to take sanctuary, when the virtuous inhabitants of the Colony into which he fled from the Scotch rebellion, may find him out, and pass that act of outlawry against him, which every Jacobitish hypocrite deserves.

“Now, I submit it to the determination of every candid unprejudiced reader, whether my conduct in writing the above mentioned letter, merits the imputation of imprudence, asserted by said writer; or whether they would have had me tamely sit down and been a spectator of the inhuman sacrifice of my friends and fellow-countrymen; or, in other words, Nero like, have sat down and fiddled, while I really supposed Boston was in flames; or exerted myself for their relief? And pray, in what easier way could I have proceeded, than in writing to one of the Militia Captains, (who I desired to forward the intelligence to the adjacent Towns,) when I really believed the story to be true? Which, having done, I immediately mounted my horse and made the best of my way towards Boston, having only four gentlemen to accompany me. Having proceeded as far as Douglass, which is about thirty miles from my own house, I met Captain Hill, of that Town, with his Company,



who had been down within about thirty miles of Boston, and had just returned. He informed me that the alarm was false, and that the forces of Worcester and Sutton were upon their return. I then turned my course homewards without loss of time, and reached my house on Sunday morning about sun-rising, taking care to acquaint the people on the road that they need not proceed any further. Immediately on my return, I sent an express to Captain Cleveland, letting him know what intelligence I had heard, and desiring him to give the like information to the adjoining Towns to the Southward.

“I believe the alarm was first occasioned by Mr. Benjamin Hallowell, who, going into Boston in a great fright, informed the Army that he had killed one man and wounded another, while they were pursuing him from Cambridge, and that the country were all in arms marching into Boston; which threw the military into great consternation; and they were quickly paraded and put into the most convenient posture of defence, in which position they remained till next day. In the midst of this hurry and confusion, I believe a post was dispatched into the country, but by whom, or to answer what purpose, I cannot tell; but what took place in consequence of it is evident. General Gage’s apprehension of danger was so great, that he speedily began to fortify the entrance to the Town, to prevent a surprise from the enemy without.

“From what has been said, I believe it will sufficiently appear that I was not the inventor of this alarm; and I am told from good authority, that the people were in motion in the Northward part of Massachusetts Government, even to the distance of one hundred miles from Boston, who were alarmed by an Express sent thither by the same Wilcot, above mentioned, before the news reached me, which I think is enough to silence the ill-natured aspersions of every cavilling Tory against my conduct, and make them, dog-like, draw in their tails and lop their ears, and skulk into some obscure hole or kennel and hide themselves from the contempt of the world. Having evidently discovered their attempt to stir up a spirit of animosity and disunion among the good people of the Colonies, I pray God it may prove abortive.

“ISRAEL PUTNAM.”



Although the September alarm was found to be false, the efficiency of Putnam in arousing the people at the time of the supposed emergency made many of the patriots, particularly those living in the eastern part of Connecticut, look to him as their leader against the British encroachments. They called him their "General" before that title was conferred upon him officially; and "notices to this effect," says his son Daniel, "flowed in upon him from every quarter after the alarm had subsided." \*

In October of this year (1774) the Connecticut Assembly, in session at New Haven, ordered the towns of the colony to provide at the earliest possible date "double the quantity of powder, ball and flints that they were heretofore by law obliged to provide." A large number of militia officers were appointed, Putnam himself being made Lieutenant-Colonel of the Eleventh Regiment, which was composed of the companies from Woodstock, Pomfret, and Killingly.† Throughout Connecticut the train-bands were drilled with greater energy than ever and every precaution taken for defence in the "alarming crisis." Outside Putnam's own colony, too, the belligerent feeling was shown by vigorous military practice. The warlike preparations of the colonists were well-timed, for the King's troops made an aggressive movement in April. On the evening of the 18th of that month, a detachment of eight hundred men, under orders from General Gage, started from Boston, intending not only to capture

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\* Letter of Daniel Putnam, written in 1825 to the *Bunker Hill Monument Association*, and printed in 1860 in the *Collections of the Connecticut Historical Society*, vol. i.

† *Record of Connecticut Men during the War of the Revolution*, Adjutant-General's Office, Hartford.

the military stores collected at Concord, but also to stop on the way at Lexington and arrest the "arch-rebels," Samuel Adams and John Hancock. So expeditiously, however, did the patriotic messenger, Paul Revere, forewarn the people that the British soldiers were defeated in their purpose and hotly pursued back to Boston by the armed yeomanry.\* In this series of skirmishes on April 19th, the retreating troops left nearly three hundred of their number killed or wounded along the road, while the Americans lost less than one-third that number. The news of the affair spread with remarkable swiftness. It was indeed "the spark"—to use the historian Gordon's words—which "set the whole continent in a flame."

On Thursday morning, April 20th, Putnam and his son Daniel, who was then fifteen years of age, had gone into the field near the tavern at Brooklyn Green to plow. They were busily at work when about eight o'clock a messenger rode into the village in hot haste,

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\* Although Putnam was not present at the battle of Lexington, the pistols which he carried in the American Revolution were a trophy of that eventful day. They were none other than those of Major Pitcairn who had discharged one of them when he gave his soldiers the order to fire on the minutemen who were drawn up on Lexington Green. Later in the day, when the British were retreating, Pitcairn's horse was shot under him, and in the haste of dismounting in order to escape his pursuers, the British officer left his weapons behind him. They were captured by the Americans and, a few weeks later, were offered as a gift to Washington, but he declined them. They were then presented to Putnam and were his constant companions during the rest of his military career. These silver-mounted and handsomely engraved pistols are now kept in the Cary Library at Lexington, having been given to the town by the widow of John P. Putnam, of Cambridge, N. Y.



ISRAEL PUTNAM'S PLOW.



with a dispatch for Daniel Tyler, Jr.\* It was from the town clerk of Worcester, Massachusetts, who had forwarded a copy of a letter which he had received from the Committee of Safety at Watertown, dated "Wednesday morning, Near 10 o'clock, April 19, 1775," announcing that the British had fired on the militia at Lexington, had "killed six men and wounded four others," and were on their march into the country. Young Tyler hurried with the news to his father-in-law in the field. In instant response to the alarm, Putnam—so wrote his son Daniel in after years—"loitered not but left *me*, the driver of his team, to unyoke it in the furrow, and not many days after to follow him to camp." Without changing his working-clothes, the energetic patriot mounted a horse at the stable that he might himself spread the alarming tidings and also consult with the militia officers and the committees of the neighbouring towns of Windham County. He hastened to the home of Governor Jonathan Trumbull at Lebanon, and received orders from him to go to Boston.

Meantime, about three o'clock in the afternoon, another dispatch reached Putnam's village, giving an account of the fight at Concord. Colonel Ebenezer Williams of Pomfret, a member of the Connecticut Committee of Safety, forwarded the news by express to Canterbury and elsewhere, urging "every man who is fit and willing" to come out for action, for "there were about forty of our men killed" by the British.

When Putnam returned home, two hours or so after the second dispatch was received, he found hundreds of men gathered on Brooklyn Green ready to obey his

\* Daniel Tyler, Jr., was Putnam's son-in-law, having married his daughter Mehitabel in 1771.



orders. He told them that, according to the arrangements which he had been making on his consultatory tour, military officers would soon arrive to direct their movements. It was now nearly sunset, but without stopping to rest or to change the checked farmer's frock which he had been wearing since he left his plough in the morning, Putnam, indefatigable patriot that he was, started on a night ride for Cambridge. That he reached there the next day, and after consultation with the Committee of Safety galloped on to Concord is evident from the following letter which he wrote to Colonel Williams of Pomfret. He had ridden not less than a hundred miles in eighteen hours.

"CONCORD, April 21.

"*To Colonel E. Williams.* SIR—I have waited on the Committee of the Provincial Congress, and it is their Determination to have a standing Army of 22,000 men from the New-England Colonies, of which it is supposed the Colony of Connecticut must raise 6000, and begs they would be at *Cambridge* as speedily as possible, with Conveniences ; together with Provisions, and a Sufficiency of Ammunition for their own Use.

"The Battle here is much as has been represented at Pomfret, except that there is more killed and a Number more taken Prisoners.

"The Accounts at present are so confused that it is impossible to ascertain the number exact, but shall inform you of the Proceedings, from Time to Time, as we have new Occurrences ; mean Time, I am,

"Sir, your humble servant,

"ISRAEL PUTNAM.

"N. B. The troops of Horse are not expected to come until further notice."

"A true copy, E. WILLIAMS." \*

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\* This is the form in which Putnam's letter appears as printed in an extra from the office of the *Packet*, published at Norwich, Connecticut, on Sunday, April 23, 1775. The broad-



NEWS FROM LEXINGTON : PUTNAM LEAVING THE PLOW.

FROM THE PAINTING BY ALONZO CHAPPEL.



Putnam returned from Concord to Cambridge without delay, for we find him, on April 22nd, present at a Council of War\* held at the latter place. He sent dispatches, also, from Cambridge on that date, to the Connecticut Committees of Correspondence, urging them to forward immediately supplies of troops and provisions.

Just a week after the battle of Lexington, General Artemas Ward, the chief commander of the Massachusetts forces, was at Roxbury, while Putnam took general command of the minutemen and individual volunteers, who arrived in large numbers at Cambridge. In the excitement and confusion caused by the inpouring of the troops, both these officers had, according to Colonel Jedediah Huntington of Norwich, Conn., who reached the vicinity of Boston on April 26th, "too much business upon their hands."

Putnam was soon summoned back to Connecticut, for the General Assembly in special session at Hartford had raised him to the rank of Brigadier-General, and wished to consult with him in regard to the movements of the troops over whom he had been appointed.

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side of this special edition of the old newspaper has this imprint: "Printed by Robertsons and Trumbull, who will in a few Days have for Sale, *The Crisis*, number One and Two—*A Bloody Court! a Bloody Ministry! and a Bloody Parliament!*"

\* Orderly Book of Colonel William Henshaw.





## CHAPTER XVI

### A BOLD LEADER

1775



Second Brigadier-General, Putnam ranked third among the officers appointed, April 26, 1775, by the General Assembly of Connecticut, David Wooster of New Haven having been chosen Major-General, and Joseph Spencer of East Haddam, First Brigadier-General of the force from that colony. Each of these three officers was also made colonel of a regiment and captain of a company. The Assembly had voted to raise six thousand troops to be formed into six regiments of ten companies each, a company being composed of one hundred men. The 3rd Regiment, which Putnam commanded as colonel,—he was also captain of the 1st Company in the same regiment,—was recruited chiefly in Windham County, and began marching in May by companies to the camps forming around Boston. Putnam's eldest son, Israel, was now to share in military service, for he was captain of the 10th Company in this regiment, and a few weeks later was appointed aide-de-camp to his father.

Realising the importance of being again near the seat of hostilities, Putnam set out for Boston within a



week after his return to Connecticut. In passing through Massachusetts this second time, he stopped at Sutton to rest and dine at the home of his relative, Deacon Tarrant Putnam.\* The old flagstone is still pointed out "where the loving friends and cousins embraced each other and wept" just before the hero mounted his horse to continue his journey.

On his arrival at Cambridge, Putnam found that the Borland house had been selected as his headquarters. This large square wooden house stood directly opposite the present University building, Gore Hall. John Borland, a merchant, had occupied the house up to the time of the outbreak of the war, but since then, being a loyalist, he had abandoned it and taken refuge in Boston.

The reason why Putnam and his regiment were kept at Cambridge while the rest of the force from his colony took post under Spencer at Roxbury, has been interestingly stated by Daniel Putnam, who joined his father in May, and had the opportunity for a personal knowledge of the facts which we find recorded in his valuable letter of 1825 to the Bunker Hill Monument Association :

"The fact may not now be generally known, but it is not the less a truth that the presence of Genl. Putnam at Cambridge was extremely desirable to Genl. Ward, and it was for that reason that he was separated from the other Connecticut troops and placed near Head Quarters. . . .

"Until the appointment of Washington, Genl. Ward's was a delicate and highly responsible station, and it was natural he should not only wish for Genl. Putnam's experience and advice to assist him in difficulties, but there should be one who stood

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\* *History of Sutton, Mass.*, by W. A. Benedict and H. A. Tracy.

high in the confidence of the people, on whom he might lean for support, and with whom he might divide the responsibility. Their views of public affairs, and the proper measures to be pursued, were not exactly the same, but the utmost harmony subsisted between them."

Putnam, the aggressive patriot, was from the first a great favourite in the army, as his son Daniel remarks with pride:

"His popularity was not confined to Connecticut but pervaded the whole of the Massachusetts forces then before Boston; and there was not a soldier in their ranks but seemed ready to follow him, to fight for him, and if need be to die by his side. Even Warren, the accomplished gentleman, the daring patriot, and the future hope of the army, delighted, when the complicated duties of his station permitted, to spend an hour at Putnam's quarters. He would listen attentively to his tales of a former war, and make earnest and particular enquiries of him as to the relative power and influence of British and Provincial troops in that war. Putnam maintained that when the Provincial regiments were well officered, they were not inferior to the British. 'Our men,' he said, 'would always follow wherever their officers led,—I know this to have been the case with mine, and have also seen it in other instances.'"

There were grave apprehensions of a sally from Boston by the King's troops, but the intrepid Putnam assured his fellow-patriots that the advantage would all be on the American side, however large a force the enemy might send out.

"Warren asked him," continues Daniel Putnam, "if 10,000 British troops should march out of Boston, what number in his opinion would be competent to meet them? Putnam answered, 'Let me pick my officers, and I would not fear to meet them with half the number;—not in a pitched battle to

stop them at once, for no troops are better than the British, but I would fight on the retreat, and every stone-wall we passed should be lined with their dead ;—our men are lighter of foot, they understand our grounds and how to take advantage of them ; and besides, we should only fall back on our reserve, while every step they advanced, the country would close on their flanks and rear.’ ”

The bold officer was not satisfied with merely uttering stout-hearted words. He was eager that fortifications should be begun at once in order that the Americans might be fully prepared to repel an attack and prevent the enemy from even attempting an advance into the country. Detachments of Massachusetts and Connecticut troops were accordingly set to work in building defences in Cambridge and in throwing up a breastwork on the Cambridge road, near the base of Prospect Hill. Putnam is described as being “ constantly on horseback or on foot, working with his men or encouraging them.” On his round of inspection, he found one day that some of the Massachusetts men had been evidently neglecting their work. Caleb Haskell, a Revolutionary soldier, used afterwards to tell how Putnam demanded of them, “ ‘To what regiment do you belong?’ ” “ ‘To Colonel Doolittle’s,’ ” they replied. “ ‘Doolittle? Do nothing at all!’ ” the General bluntly exclaimed.

The importance of defence against the British was not Putnam’s only reason for having the fortifications built.

“His experience had taught him,” so Daniel recounts what he had often heard his father say, “that raw and undisciplined troops *must* be employed in some way or other, or they would soon become vicious and unmanageable. His maxim was,

'It is better to dig a ditch every morning and fill it up at evening than to have the men idle.' "

Prospect Hill and the Charlestown Heights were points which Putnam was strongly in favour of fortifying, but at this early period many of the officers as well as members of the Committee of Safety and the Provincial Congress appear to have been unwilling to consent to such aggressive movements. The Connecticut general found, however, a warm sympathiser in his plans in the gallant Colonel William Prescott of Massachusetts. One afternoon, when Putnam had just marked out at Cambridge a new line on which his men had commenced work, this officer, accompanied by Colonel Gardiner, came up.

"I wish, General," said Prescott, "your men were digging nearer Boston." "I wish so, too," replied Putnam, "and I hope we shall all be of one mind before long."

The British Commander Gage, having learned that his personal friend of the French and Indian War was a leader in the army besieging Boston,

"found the means," according to Humphreys, "to convey a proposal privately to General Putnam that if he would relinquish the rebel party, he might rely upon being made a Major-General on the British establishment, and receiving a great pecuniary compensation for his services. General Putnam spurned at the offer; which, however, he thought prudent at that time to conceal from public notice."

Similar overtures were made by Gage to other veterans of the earlier war, among them Putnam's old comrade, Colonel John Stark, who was now serving in the patriotic army, in command of a New Hampshire regi-



ment. But such efforts of the British General to break the rebellion were in vain.\* Indeed, the American officers took steps at once to impress Gage with the strength of their force and also to inspire their men with confidence. Putnam, in the afternoon of May 13th, led in person all the troops at Cambridge, except those on guard, into Charlestown within reach of the British cannon, both from the men-of-war and Boston, which would have made great havoc among the Americans if the enemy had opened fire. The line of march on this bold enterprise extended a mile and a half. The men, who numbered twenty-two hundred in all, marched over Bunker Hill and also over Breed's Hill. They came out by Captain Henly's still-house, and having entered the main street at the fish-market, near the old ferry where the Charles River Bridge was afterwards built, they returned to Cambridge.

During the latter part of May several skirmishes took place, caused by the endeavour of both parties to secure the hay and stock on the islands in the harbour. At different times the British fired upon the Americans from the shipping. An engagement, in which Putnam

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\* An English newspaper of the time mentioned in its columns that Putnam, in compliance with a request of General Gage, went into Boston for a personal interview with him. This statement was, however, soon afterwards contradicted, being "void of foundation." Gage's premature confidence that he would be able to "purchase the Rebel Generals" misled Capt. John Montresor, the same who had been with Putnam under Bradstreet in 1764, and who was now serving as engineer in the British army. Montresor notes without warrant in his journal that "even Israel Putnam, of Connecticut, might have been bought to my certain knowledge for one dollar per day, or 8 shillings New York currency."



took active part, occurred May 27th in the vicinity of Chelsea. A graphic description of it was published soon afterwards in *Almon's Remembrancer* for 1775 :

"A CIRCUMSTANTIAL ACCOUNT OF A SKIRMISH BETWEEN THE PROVINCIALS AND THE REGULARS  
AT CHELSEA, HOGG ISLAND, &c.

"On Saturday last, the 27th of May, a part of the American army at Cambridge, to the number of between two and three hundred men, had orders [from the Committee of Safety] to drive off the live stock from Hogg and Noddle's Islands which places lie near Chelsea and Winnesimit, on the north-east side of Boston harbour. From Chelsea to Hogg Island [now Breed's Island] at low water, it is but about knee deep, and from that to Noddle's Island [now East Boston] about the same. . . .

"About eleven o'clock, A.M., between twenty and thirty men belonging to the proprietors of the cattle, were sent from Chelsea to Hogg Island, to drive off the stock which was there, but were interrupted by a schooner and a sloop (dispatched from the fleet in Boston harbour) and about 40 marines, who had been stationed there to protect the stock. However, they drove off two fine English stallions, two colts and three cows, killed fifteen cows, burnt a large barn full of salt hay, and an old farm-house. By this time they were fired on by the schooner and sloop, and a large number of marines in boats, sent from the several ships of war; upon which they retreated to a ditch on the marsh, and kept themselves undiscovered till they had an opportunity to fire on the marines, when they shot two dead, and wounded two more, one of whom died soon after. They then retreated to Hogg Island, where they were joined by the remainder of their party from Chelsea, and drove off all the stock thereon, viz. between three and four hundred sheep and lambs, some cows, horses, &c.

"During the driving off the cattle, there were continual firings between the provincials, and the schooner, sloop, boats and marines on the other island.

"Having cleared Hogg Island, the provincials drew up on Chelsea Neck, and sent for a reinforcement of 300 men [Putnam commanded this party, in which Dr. Warren served as a

volunteer] and two pieces of cannon (four pounders) which arrived about nine o'clock in the evening, soon after which General Putnam went down and hailed the schooner and told the people that if they would submit they should have good quarters, which the schooner returned with two cannon shot ; this was immediately answered with two cannon from the provincials.

" Upon this a very heavy fire ensued from both sides, which lasted until eleven at night, at which time the fire from the schooner ceased, the fire from the shore being so hot that her people were obliged to quit her and take to the boats, a great number of which had been sent from the shore to their assistance, and also a large reinforcement of marines sent to Noddle's Island with two twelve pounders.

" The schooner being thus left drove ashore ; about the break of day the provincials carried some hay under her stern, set fire to it, and burnt her to ashes ; the sloop keeping up a small fire upon them.

" At this time a heavy cannonading began at Noddle's Island Hill, with the twelve pounders upon the Provincials, and General Putnam kept up a heavy fire on the sloop, disabled her much, and killed many of her men so that she was obliged to be towed off by the boats when the firing ceased, excepting a few shot which exchanged between the party at Chelsea, and the marines on Noddle's Island.

" Thus ended this long action without the loss of one Provincial and only four wounded, one of whom was wounded by the bursting of his own gun, and another only lost his little finger.

" The loss of the enemy amounted to at least twenty killed and fifty wounded. [This estimate of the loss of the British seems to be exaggerated.] The Provincials took out of the schooner four double fortified four pounders, twelve swivels, the chief of her rigging and her sails, which the sailors and marines left behind, with many clothes, some money, &c., they having quitted her in great haste."

After his all-night experience in discomfiting the enemy, Putnam returned to Cambridge on Sunday

morning. He was "wet and covered to the waist with marsh mud," says Daniel, "contracted by wading over the flats to burn the vessel." General Ward and Dr. Warren were already at the Borland house, anxiously awaiting the hero, in order to learn the details of the affair.

"Without changing his dress," the son continues, "he related to them the events of the day, and added, 'I wish we could have something of this kind to do every day; it would teach our men how little danger there is from cannon balls, for tho' they have sent a great many at us, nobody has been hurt by them. I would that Gage and his troops were within our reach, for we would be like hornets about their ears; as little birds follow and tease the eagle in his flight, we would every day contrive to make them uneasy.' Warren smiled and said nothing, but General Ward replied, 'As peace and reconciliation is what we seek for, would it not be better to act only on the defensive and give no unnecessary provocation?' Putnam turned to Warren and said with emphasis, '*You know*, Dr. Warren, we shall have no peace worth anything, till we gain it by the sword.' Instead of any direct reply, Warren observed, 'Your wet clothes must be uncomfortable, General, and we will take our leave that you may change them,'—and taking Putnam's hand he continued, 'I admire your spirit and respect General Ward's prudence, both will be necessary for us, and one must temper the other.'"

The success of the Noddle's Island encounter gave the "country troops," as Ezekiel Price stated in his diary, "great spirits." The skirmish was magnified into a battle and the fact that not an American had been killed was dwelt upon with unbounded exultation. The jubilation of the Connecticut people, on hearing of the affair, found expression in a saying which was soon repeated throughout other colonies, that "the British were the Philistines and Putnam the

American Samson, a chosen instrument to defeat the foe." The members of the Continental Congress, assembled at Philadelphia, received the news of the fight just as they were about to choose general officers, and the story of Putnam's bravery aroused such enthusiasm among them that, in the words of Roger Sherman, one of the representatives from Connecticut in the Congress,

"his [Putnam's] successful enterprise at Noddle's Island gave him the preference in the opinion of the delegates in general so that his appointment [on June 19, 1775, as Fourth Major-General of the Continental Army] was unanimous." \*

The newspapers of the period contain frequent allusions to this "warrior" who had shown "the same dauntless courage with which he entered the den of the wolf." Here is an acrostic which was received with great acclaim :

" Pure mass of courage, every soldier's wonder,  
Unto the Field he steps, enrobed with martial Thunder,  
Tares up the elements, and rends the Earth asunder.  
Nature designed him for the Field of Battle,  
Unused to Statesmen's wiles or courtier's prattle,  
Mars-like, his chief Delights, where thundering cannon  
rattle."

In the celebrated satire, "M'Fingal," by John Trumbull (born 1750, died 1831), which was published in 1782, we find the following lines, describing Putnam's fearlessness. The poet introduces his reference to the bold General by ridiculing the British Commander Gage, who has been aptly called "the wind-bag warrior whose professional enterprise found its most glorious vent in a crusade of thunderous proclamations":

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\* Letter to General David Wooster.



“ Though Gage, whom proclamations call  
Your Gov’ruor and Vice Admiral,  
Whose power gubernatorial still  
Extends as far as Bunker’s Hill,  
Whose admiralty reaches, clever,  
Near half a mile up Mystic river,  
Whose naval force yet keeps the seas,  
Can run away whene’er he ’d please.  
Nay, stern with rage, grim Putnam boiling,  
Plundered both Hogg and Noddle Island ;  
Scared troops of Tories into town,  
Burned all their hay and houses down,  
And menaced Gage unless he ’d flee,  
To drive him headlong to the sea ;  
As once, to faithless Jews a sign,  
The De’el, turned hog-reeve, did the swine.”

There is another humorous reference to Putnam in the same poem. The author is satirising General Gage for having violated his agreement with the selectmen of Boston by refusing the inhabitants passes to leave the town :

“ So Gage of late agreed you know,  
To let the Boston people go,  
Yet when he saw, ’gainst troops that braved him,  
They were the only guards that saved him,  
Kept off that Satan of a Putnam  
From breaking in to maul and mutt’n him,  
He ’d too much wit such leagues to observe,  
And shut them in again to starve.”

Early in June arrangements were made with General Gage for an exchange of prisoners, some of whom had been taken in the Lexington and Concord battle. On the day of the transaction, Putnam represented the military and Dr. Warren the civil authority on the part of the Americans. The *Essex Gazette* published im-



mediately afterwards an entertaining report of what took place on this occasion when Putnam had the pleasure of renewing an old friendship :

“CAMBRIDGE, NEW ENGLAND, June 6, 1775.

“This being the day agreed on for the exchange of Prisoners, between twelve and one o'clock, Doctor Warren and Brigadier General Putnam in a phaeton, together with Major Dunbar and Lieutenant Hamilton of the Sixty-Fourth on horseback ; Lieutenant Potter of the Marines in a chaise ; John Hilton of the Forty-Seventh, Alexander Campbell of the Fourth, John Tyne, Samuel Marcy, Thomas Parry, and Thomas Sharp of the Marines, wounded men, in two carts,—the whole escorted by the Weathersfield Company under the command of Captain Chester,—entered the Town of Charlestown, and marching slowly through it halted at the ferry where, upon a signal being given, Major Moncrief landed from the *Lively*, in order to receive the prisoners and see his old friend, General Putnam. Their meeting was truly cordial and affectionate.”

Major John Brooks, afterwards Governor of Massachusetts, who witnessed this reunion, used to tell how these two friends, former companions-in-arms in the Havana campaign, “ran into each other's arms and kissed each other to the great diversion and astonishment of the country people of the army.”

But to continue the contemporaneous newspaper account of the exchange of prisoners :

“The wounded privates were soon sent on board the *Lively*, but Major Moncrief and the other officers returned with General Putnam and Doctor Warren to the house of Doctor Foster, where an entertainment was provided for them.

“About three o'clock a signal was made by the *Lively* that they were ready to deliver up our prisoners ; upon which, General Putnam and Major Moncrief went to the ferry, where they received Messrs. John Peck, James Hewes, James Brewer, and

Daniel Preston, of Boston ; Messrs. Samuel Frost and Seth Russell, of Cambridge ; Mr. Joseph Bell, of Danvers ; Mr. Elijah Seaver, of Roxbury, and Caesar Augustus, a negro servant to Mr. Tileston, of Dorchester, who were conducted to the house of Captain Foster, and there refreshed ; after which, the General and Major returned to their company, and spent an hour or two in a very agreeable manner. Between five and six o'clock, Major Moncrief, with the officers that had been delivered up to him, were conducted to the ferry, where the *Lively's* barge received them. After which, General Putnam, with the prisoners that had been delivered to him, &c., returned to Cambridge, escorted in the same manner as before."

Putnam returned to his quarters in high spirits.

"He said he had met again some of his old friends," writes Daniel, "but he appeared most gratified that Gage should have consented to an exchange of prisoners. 'He may *call* us *Rebels* now, if he will, but why then don't he hang his prisoners instead of exchanging them? By this act he has virtually placed us on an equality, and acknowledged our *right* of resistance.' "

Daniel adds other reminiscences of his father who, eager as ever that fortifications should be built nearer Boston, had looked at the Charlestown Heights with great interest when passing by them for the exchange of prisoners.

"Next day [June 7th] there was quite a levee of officers at Putnam's quarters to talk about the exchange. He related to them all the particulars, and turning to Col. Prescott, said, 'Colonel, I saw ground yesterday that may suit your purpose. I suppose you have not forgotten your remark of the other day about *digging* ; but more of this another time.'

"Prescott called in the evening and they walked out together ; for several succeeding days he was at Putnam's quarters, and they were in private conversation."

About June 10th Putnam determined to test the courage of his men by leading them again into Charlestown. All the troops at Cambridge were accordingly ordered "to parade on the Common, armed and accoutred." The lad Daniel took his place in the ranks as a volunteer.

"I felt proud," says this true son of a brave sire, "to be numbered among what I then thought to be a mighty host destined for some great enterprise. We were marched to Charlestown, and I supposed it was intended to 'take Boston,' but after parading about on the high grounds awhile, we all returned in safety to our quarters at Cambridge."

For several days after this second march into Charlestown, Putnam "appeared thoughtful and absent in his mind," as if planning some warlike expedition which he had resolved to undertake. His personal eccentricities became very marked, as Daniel tells us :

"In such seasons of abstraction he was in the habit of giving an indistinct kind of utterance to his thoughts, or what may be termed 'talking to one's self,' and broken sentences such as follow escaped his lips,—'We must go there,'—'Think they will come out,'—'Yes, yes, they must,'—'I'll go with my regiment anyhow,'—'We must go in the night,'—'We'll carry our tools and have a trench before morning,'—'He's a good fellow,'—'He wants to go,'—'Says he will go, if they'll let him,'—'Lay still,—*lay still, I say*, till they come close,'—'They won't hurt you,'—'I know 'em of old, they fire without aim,'—these and such like burstings of his mind continued several days, not in a regular chain as I have set them down, but breaking forth occasionally, and often accompanied with some significant gesture, which left no doubt but he was contemplating some important military operation. To me it was almost certain for I had all my life been accustomed to such sallies, but more especially after the alarm [of September, 1774] up to the affair at Lexington, he had almost daily such like communings with himself."

Putnam's abstraction at Cambridge, which the boy noticed, had been very apparent since a session of the Council of War at which the report of a committee, advising the construction of additional fortifications, had been warmly discussed. It was decided to accept the part of the report which recommended the building of a breastwork near the Red House, another opposite, on the side of Prospect Hill, and a redoubt on the top of Winter Hill, but there was much difference of opinion in regard to the expediency of a redoubt on Bunker Hill, which the committee had also recommended. Colonel Prescott, Colonel Palmer, and other officers agreed with Putnam in strongly favouring this last advanced position, but General Ward and Dr. Warren opposed it, arguing that "as we had no powder to spare and no battering cannon, it would be idle to make approaches on the town."

Daniel Putnam, in reporting the "spirited conversation," tells how his father replied to the objectors and what an effect his dauntless spirit had on at least one member of the council :

"He [Putnam] told them they had entirely mistaken his views, that it was not for the purpose of battering the town, but to draw the enemy from it, where we might meet them on equal terms, and that Charlestown and Dorchester were the only points where this could be done, that the army wished to be employed and the country was growing dissatisfied at the inactivity of it.

"It was objected again that it might bring on a general battle and that in our position it was neither politic or safe to risk one.

"He replied, '2,000 men will be enough to risk, and with that number we will go on and defend ourselves as long and as well as we can and then give the ground.'

"'But suppose your retreat should be intercepted?' 'We





STATUE OF ISRAEL PUTNAM.

J. Q. A. WARD, SCULPTOR.





will guard against that, and run when we can contend no longer with advantage ; we can outrun them, and behind every wall rally and oppose their progress till we join our friends again. But suppose the worst, suppose us hemmed in and no retreat ; we know what we are contending for ; we will set our country an example of which it shall not be ashamed, and show those who seek to oppress us what men can do who are determined to live *free* or not live at all !

“Warren, he [Putnam] said, rose and walked several times across the room, leaned a few moments over the back of a chair in a thoughtful attitude and said, ‘Almost thou persuadest me, General Putnam, but I must still think the project a rash one. Nevertheless, if it should ever be adopted and the strife becomes hard, you must not be surprised to find me with you in the midst of it.’

“‘I hope not, Sir,’ said Putnam, ‘you are yet but a young man, and our country has much to hope from you both in council and in war. It is only a little brush we have been contemplating ; let some of us who are older and can well enough be spared begin the fray ; there will be time enough for you hereafter, for it will not soon be ended.’”

Young Thomas Knowlton — Putnam’s “favourite officer,”—who was captain of the 5th Company in the Connecticut regiment at Cambridge, was among those who

“wholly disapproved of the project, insisting that it would probably prove fatal to the American troops engaged in it, for the British by landing at Charlestown Neck under the protection of the floating batteries and ships of war could cut off from the hill all supplies of provisions and ammunition, besides rendering retreat extremely hazardous if not impossible.”

Knowlton, like Warren, was, however, so impressed by Putnam’s fearless patriotism, that he expressed a hearty willingness to do his part in case the Bunker Hill plan were adopted. “I shall accompany you with my men and exert myself to the utmost,” he was heard

to remark to Putnam when the latter came to his quarters for a private interview on the subject.\*

The question of fortifying Bunker Hill was brought up at another session of the Council of War, and again Putnam, according to Colonel Swett, "advanced his favourite maxim, 'the Americans are not at all afraid of their heads though very much afraid of their legs; if you cover these, they will fight forever.'"

The matter was soon decided, for affairs had reached a crisis. The British force in Boston had been increased by the recent arrival of Generals William Howe, Henry Clinton, and John Burgoyne, with reinforcements; and authentic information had been brought to the Americans that General Gage intended to take possession of Dorchester Heights on the night of June 18th. The patriotic officers now saw but one way to anticipate the hostile movement, and that was by occupying the Charlestown Heights without delay. Therefore, in accordance with the recommendation of the Committee of Safety, they took steps at once that "possession of Bunker's Hill be securely kept and defended."

At the time of the adoption of this important measure, the main body of the American forces was at Cambridge, where General Ward had established his headquarters. It numbered between seven and eight thousand men,—nearly one-half of the whole army around Boston,—and included fifteen Massachusetts regiments, a battalion of artillery, and Putnam's own regiment, with other Connecticut troops. Most of the Connecticut men, belonging to this centre division of the besieging army, were stationed at Inman's farm.

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\* *Col. Thomas Knowlton* by Ashbel Woodward in the *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, vol. xv.

The 'Tory owner of this estate, Ralph Inman, a merchant, was at the time a refugee in Boston. His wife, who with her nieces had remained behind at the homestead, became greatly alarmed at the presence of the "rebel troops" on the farm and applied to Putnam for protection against any depredations by them. Extra guards were accordingly posted near the dwelling, and in order to relieve Mrs. Inman further of needless anxiety, the General arranged that his son should become a member of her household.

"By direction of my father," says Daniel, "from about the middle of May, I lodged every night in her house"; and he adds, with pardonable pride, "Young as I was, the family confided much in the protection afforded by General Putnam's son."

After returning as usual in the morning from the Inman home to the Borland house near the college buildings, the lad was quick to observe, on the day preceding the battle of Bunker Hill, that preparations were being made for a military enterprise of importance. His greatest interest centred in the fact that his father was evidently to take a leading part in it.





## CHAPTER XVII

### THE BATTLE OF BUNKER HILL

1775



WHEN orders were issued on Friday, June 16, 1775, for a detachment to parade on Cambridge Common at six o'clock that evening, the men were not informed in regard to the object of the expedition, but they were told to furnish themselves with all the intrenching tools in the camp, with provisions for twenty-four hours, and with packs and blankets.

"I noticed an unusual stir among the troops at Cambridge," writes Daniel Putnam in recalling the events of that day. "Putnam's regiment was under arms, and I was informed by the Adjutant that a detachment had been made from it for 'secret service'; but what at the time impressed my mind most strongly was the preparation my father himself was making. With his own hands he prepared cartridges for his pistols, took out the old flints and put in the new. While he was doing this, Col. Prescott came in and observing what he was about, said in a low tone, 'I see, General, you are making preparation and we shall be ready at the time.'"

There had been an "understanding" between the Connecticut hero and the brave Pepperell officer that



the latter should have part in the expedition if it should ever be undertaken. "General Ward was apprised of this," Daniel reports what he heard his father state in after years in regard to the promise, "and Prescott with all his regiment was ordered on that service."

Besides Prescott's regiment, two other Massachusetts regiments—Colonel Ebenezer Bridge's and Colonel James Frye's—were ordered to parade, but, according to Putnam's statement, "it was found that intrenching tools could not be had for more than about 1,000 men." So a detachment, equal to that number only, was made up of details from the three Massachusetts regiments. This force was to be accompanied by Captain Samuel Gridley's artillery company with two field-pieces. In compliance with the urgent request of Putnam, two hundred Connecticut men under Captain Thomas Knowlton were also ordered to march.

The whole working-force was put in charge of Colonel Prescott. The veteran Colonel Richard Gridley, the chief engineer, was to mark out the line of the proposed fortification on Bunker Hill. Owing to the peculiarly loose organisation of the American army around Boston and lack of system in the camp, no specific directions in regard to the general command on the Charlestown peninsula, in case of an engagement there with the enemy, were issued by General Ward; his orders to Prescott related only to the special duty of building and defending the redoubt itself. Patriotic interests however, outweighed military technicalities. Putnam was preparing to go on the field to exercise by virtue of his rank such authority as the pressing emergency might demand. That he had been identified with the warlike project as its moving spirit from the time it was

first suggested at a council of general officers, and that he was now strenuously solicitous for its success, were of themselves sufficient reasons for his assuming in this crisis certain rights of leadership in the execution of the enterprise.

Daniel describes with touching simplicity the parting from his father on the eve of the memorable battle :

“A little after sunset my father called me aside and said, ‘You will go to Mrs. Inman’s as usual to-night, and it is time you were gone. You need not return here in the morning, but stay there to-morrow ; the family may want you and if they find it necessary to leave the house, you must go with them where they go ; and try now, my son, to be as serviceable to them as you can.’

“This order, connected with what I had seen during the day, left no doubt in my mind that some military movement was going forward in which my father was to participate. I called to mind his abstraction and self-communing, the broken sentences that had escaped him, indicating battle and bloodshedding, and my imagination pictured him as mangled with wounds and none to help him. With earnest entreaty I asked leave to accompany him. ‘You, dear father,’ I said, ‘may need my assistance much more than Mrs. Inman ; pray let me go where you are going.’—‘No, no, Daniel, do as I have bid you,’ was the answer which he affected to give sternly, while his voice trembled and his eyes filled. Then, as if perfectly comprehending what had been passing in my mind, he added, ‘You can do little, my son, where I am going, and besides, there will be enough to take care of me.’

“I went as directed to Mrs. Inman’s, but took no interest in the conversation of her nieces or the maternal kindness of their aunt ; my mind was elsewhere and I retired early to bed, but not to sleep ; the night was as sleepless to me as to those who were toiling or watching on the confines of Boston. I had a strong suspicion that Charlestown was the spot to which the hostile movement was directed ; and long before the first gun was fired I had risen and seated myself at the window of my chamber, anxiously looking thitherward.”

Meanwhile the troops, chosen for the military undertaking which had excited the boy's solicitous wondering had paraded on Cambridge Common, and after prayer by President Samuel Langdon of Harvard College, had set out about nine o'clock on their mysterious march. At their head was Colonel Prescott, who was preceded a few paces by two sergeants carrying dark lanterns. The waggons, laden with intrenching tools, brought up the rear of the column. Putnam on horseback had ridden in advance to Charlestown Neck, where he awaited the detachment. Soon through the darkness he descried the forms of Prescott and the men, approaching with silent tread. "We were halted at the Neck by General Putnam," testifies Josiah Cleveland, a Connecticut private, "and ordered to load with two balls." The object of the expedition, hitherto kept secret, was now explained by the officers to the soldiers, and after a small party had been detached to guard the lower part of Charlestown the main body of troops advanced over Bunker Hill,—the round smooth hill, one hundred and ten feet high, which sloped on their right towards the Charles River and on their left towards the Mystic River. "We marched in profound silence," says Cleveland, "General Putnam at our head."

On a ridge of ground, on the south, which connected Bunker Hill with another height, Breed's Hill, seventy-five feet high, the troops halted again. A long discussion, in which Putnam took part, ensued as to just what place should be fortified. Samuel Gray, a contemporary, says that

"the engineer [Colonel Richard Gridley] and two generals [General Putnam and probably General John Whitcomb] went on to the hill at night, and reconnoitred the ground; that one

general and the engineer were of the opinion we ought not to intrench on Charlestown Hill (Breed's Hill) till we had thrown up some works on the north and south ends of Bunker Hill, to cover our men in their retreat if that should happen; but on the pressing importunity of the other general officer it was consented to begin as was done." \*

In deciding thus to proceed to Breed's Hill, the eminence nearest Boston, the officers agreed that works should be begun as soon as possible on Bunker Hill, for the order was explicit as to fortifying the latter position.

It was nearly midnight. Time was precious, for only four hours remained before dawn. Engineer Gridley hastily marked out the plan for a fortification on the hill farthest to the front. Noiselessly the pickaxes and shovels were unloaded from the carts and distributed. The men unslung their packs, stacked their arms, and vigorously set to work raising the defences which on the morrow would challenge and astonish the enemy. British men-of-war and floating batteries lay anchored along the water-front, all within gun-shot, but neither the sailors on board of them nor the sentinels pacing up and down the Boston shore, suspected that in the silent watches of that summer night more than a thousand "rebels" were throwing up intrenchments on the hilltop not far away. While the labourers were thus busily employed, Putnam himself returned to Cambridge, not only to secure "refreshments and a reinforcement or relief for those who were expected to toil all the night," but also that he might be "mounted afresh," for "his gait," Colonel Samuel

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\* Letter by Samuel Gray to Mr. Dyer, dated Roxbury, Mass., July 12, 1775.





GENERAL ISRAEL PUTNAM.  
FROM THE PAINTING BY ALONZO CHAPPEL.





Swett tells us, was "expeditious even in ordinary riding, and his horse required to be relieved." \*

The short June night was soon ended. Immediately after discovering at daybreak the American intrenchments, the captain of the British warship *Lively* opened fire on them and soon the batteries on the other men-of-war and on Copp's Hill in Boston joined in the bombardment. The patriots, despite the cannonade, continued steadily at the task of strengthening their defences. The boom of guns, which so alarmed the Boston people that they rushed out to see what had happened, fell also on the ears of the soldiers in camp at Cambridge.

When Putnam heard at daybreak the firing of the *Lively*, he ordered "Lieutenant Clark to send to General Ward for a horse" for him to ride to the Charlestown Heights.

"The Lieutenant went himself," relates Colonel Swett, "but the General's impatience could not await an answer. On his [Clark's] return he found him mounted and departing. The summons from the *Lively* had frustrated his [Putnam's] intention of carrying on the reinforcement himself; he reminded General Ward, however, that the fate of his expedition depended on his being reinforced immediately, according to the preconcerted plan, and flew to join his men on the hill."

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\* Colonel Swett wrote in 1818, an *Historical and Topographical Sketch of Bunker Hill Battle*, as an Appendix to a new edition of Humphreys's *Essay on the Life of Israel Putnam*. In 1825, Swett revised and enlarged his text and published it separately as a *History of the Battle of Bunker Hill*. The second and third editions of this latter work contain, in the Notes, important depositions which he obtained from surviving soldiers present, June 17, 1825, at the laying of the cornerstone of the Bunker Hill monument. These reminiscences of the veterans throw much light on Putnam's part in the battle.

Galloping back in hot haste to Charlestown, Putnam must have seen, as he neared the unfinished redoubt, the tall figure of Prescott outlined in full view against the gray sky of early day, walking leisurely backwards and forwards on the parapet. The dauntless colonel, exposed to the enemy's guns, was encouraging the men at their task, and by his own fearlessness inspiring them with confidence. It was very apparent, however, that after the exhausting labour of the night, the troops needed to be relieved as soon as possible. The sun rose red, the air was oppressive, and there was every sign that the weather would become intensely hot. Putnam, on finding that there was much suffering among the men from want of food and drink, as well as from heat and fatigue, determined to return again to Cambridge to urge General Ward, who had hesitated about weakening further the main army until the enemy's plans of attack were more definitely known, to forward provisions and reinforcements without delay. "I saw Putnam and Prescott in conversation," states Thompson Maxwell, who was one of the patriot diggers at that early hour in the redoubt; "immediately after, Put mounted his horse and rode full speed towards Cambridge." "General Putnam," says Henry Burbeck, another soldier, in his reminiscences of the sultry morning, "rode between Charlestown and Cambridge without a coat, in his shirt-sleeves, and an old white felt hat on, to report to General Ward, and to consult upon further operations."

Putnam was delayed at Cambridge by the difficulty of obtaining more soldiers. Ward, in fear that the British would make the principal attack at Cambridge, was doubtful of the expediency of reducing the force stationed there and in the vicinity. On yielding finally

to Putnam's importunity, he ordered one-third of Colonel John Stark's New Hampshire regiment to march to Charlestown. After this concession by Ward, Putnam attended to the supply of ammunition, the scarcity of which was a source of grave apprehension to the members of the Committee of Safety who were assembled in the Hastings house on Cambridge Common. Eighteen barrels of powder had recently reached him from Connecticut, and these he now sent to them for such disposal as they might authorise. The necessary preparations in anticipation of the attack which Putnam believed the British would make in front of Breed's Hill occupied so much of his time at Cambridge, that it was nearly ten o'clock before he was able to start back for Charlestown. On his way thither, he met Major Brooks, whom Prescott had dispatched for troops from General Ward. Putnam, spurring his horse forward towards the heights, presently came within range of several floating batteries which were playing on the American works. He was heartily welcomed at the intrenchments; and, riding along the lines, he told the anxious soldiers of General Ward's promise to send refreshments and reinforcements. Most of the men had ceased labour, for the redoubt, eight rods square, with a breastwork extending one hundred yards on a line with its eastern side, was now substantially finished. During the morning, a private had been killed by a cannon-ball, but otherwise the British guns had done little damage.

No sooner did Putnam see the pickaxes and spades, which were piled in the rear of the redoubt, than he determined to begin the erection of works on Bunker Hill, in order that the troops might have a "second rallying-point" in case they were "ultimately driven

from the first position." He accordingly told Colonel Prescott "that the intrenching tools must be sent off." Prescott, however, remonstrated, fearing that if any of the men began to intrench on the other hill they would not have the courage to return to the front at the time of an attack. "They shall every man return," was Putnam's reply.\* And the General did not wholly misjudge the fidelity and daring of the labourers, who did go to Bunker Hill, for later in the day some of them fought well at the rail-fence and others of them went back to the redoubt. It was about eleven o'clock when the tools were removed from Breed's Hill.

"Putnam," relates Captain Ebenezer Bancroft, "rode up to us at the fort, and says, 'My lads, these tools must be carried back,' and turned and rode away. An order was never obeyed with more readiness. From every part of the line volunteers ran, and some picked up one, some two shovels, mattocks, &c., and hurried over the hill."

So energetic was Putnam in his efforts to fortify the second eminence that he narrowly escaped several times from cannon-balls. "I expected to see him knocked off," narrates Joseph Pearce, who watched him ride fearlessly from point to point. Although the General succeeded in setting men to work on Bunker Hill, there was little time left for throwing up the additional defences. At noonday the *Glasgow* frigate and *Symmetry* transport were raking Charlestown Neck. The *Somerset* man-of-war and two floating batteries at the ferry and the battery on Copp's Hill were pouring a heavy fire on the redoubt, while the *Falcon* and *Lively*, armed vessels, swept the low grounds in front of Breed's

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\* *Memoirs of Major-General William Heath*, 1798.



Hill. Under cover of the furious cannonade, barges filled with scarlet-uniformed troops steered towards Charlestown. Soon the British were seen landing in good order at Moulton's Point on the south-east corner of the peninsula. Putnam started immediately for Cambridge to secure aid against the impending attack. Since his last trip there, the Committee of Safety had prevailed upon General Ward to forward the whole of the regiments of Colonels Stark and Reed of New Hampshire, but these troops had not yet reached the Heights.

The news of the landing of the enemy was received with great excitement in Cambridge. General Ward ordered a large part of the Massachusetts forces to march at once to Charlestown. Putnam's eldest son, Israel, was a conspicuous figure in hurrying on the Connecticut men in accordance with his father's directions.

When Putnam returned to Charlestown, having passed a "galling enfilading fire of round, bar and chain shot, which thundered across the Neck," he found that Knowlton's two hundred Connecticut men of the original detachment and Gridley's artillery company were just leaving the redoubt. They had been sent out to oppose the enemy's right wing, for Prescott judged that the British were planning to surround the works. Putnam's quick glance had already detected the probability of a flank movement by the hostile troops. Riding up to Knowlton and his men as they marched down from Breed's Hill, the General pointed to a position about two hundred yards in the rear of the redoubt and ordered them to follow him. He led them in haste to a fence of posts and rails, set in a low stone wall, extending for about three hundred yards or

more towards the Mystic River. At this fence, where, in the words of a soldier, "nature had formed something of a breastwork, or else there had been a ditch many years ago," the Connecticut detachment "grounded arms and went to a neighbouring parallel fence," which was also "half of stone and two rails of wood" and "brought rails and made a slight fortification against musket-ball." Freshly mown hay, which lay in the adjacent field, was hastily gathered and piled between the rails, giving the appearance of shelter. The artillery company made ready to guard with its two field-pieces the exposed position between the rail-fence and the earth breastwork on Breed's Hill.

And now Putnam's attention was directed elsewhere, for Colonel Stark put in an appearance, having boldly crossed the Neck under the hot fire of the enemy. Putnam galloped to meet him and retained a part of the New Hampshire regiment to labour at the intrenchments on Bunker Hill. "Push on, Colonel Stark; the enemy have landed and formed," was his shout to the officer himself. Stark accordingly led the rest of the newly arrived men to the fence breastwork and extended that defence to the edge of Mystic River by ordering a stone wall to be built on the beach. Colonel Reed soon followed with the other New Hampshire regiment and took post at the rail-fence. Most of the Massachusetts troops who came about this time on the field proceeded to the redoubt and its adjacent earth breastwork; the rest, instead of marching up Breed's Hill, turned to the left, for Putnam had shouted to the officers in some of the regiments, "Draw off your troops here and man the rail-fence, for the enemy's flanking of us fast." A company of artillery under Captain John Callender arrived, and was directed to

the open space where Captain Gridley and his men were stationed.

On wheeling his horse, after giving orders near one of the cannon, Putnam suddenly encountered Dr. Joseph Warren, who, in accordance with his declared intention to share the peril of the day with his fellow-patriots, was hastening down the slope of Bunker Hill on foot, with a sword at his side and a musket on his shoulder. This young President of the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts had recently been appointed a major-general in the army of his colony, but he proposed to serve in the coming battle simply as a volunteer aid. Putnam dismounted and entered into an earnest conversation with him. "The two generals were standing," a soldier who was passing by used to tell, "and General Putnam had hold of the bridle of his horse." "They consulted on measures to be pursued," writes Colonel Swett, who afterwards learned the substance of the conversation.

"General Putnam informed him [Warren] that from long experience he perfectly comprehended the character of the British army; they would ultimately succeed and drive us from the works, but from the mode of attack they had chosen, it was in our power to do them infinite mischief, though we must be prepared for a brave and orderly retreat when we could maintain our ground no longer."

Daniel Putnam, who recounts what his father told him about the talk with Warren, is our authority for these memorable words which passed between the two patriots :

"Alluding to a former conversation he [General Putnam] said, 'I am sorry to see you here, General Warren; I wish you had taken my advice and left this day to us, for, from appearances, we shall have a sharp time of it, and since you are here

I am ready to submit myself to your orders.' Warren replied, 'I came only as a volunteer; I know nothing of your dispositions, nor will I interfere with them. Tell me where I can be most useful.' Putnam pointed to the redoubt and, intent on his [Warren's] safety, said, 'You will be covered there.' 'Don't think,' said Warren, 'I came here to seek a place of safety, but tell me where the onset will be most furious.' Putnam pointed again to the redoubt, 'That,' said he, 'is the enemy's object; Prescott is there and will do his duty, and if it can be defended the day will be ours.' Warren left him and walked quietly towards the redoubt."

The cheers which presently rose from Breed's Hill told how cordially Warren was greeted there by the men. On entering the redoubt he was tendered the command by Prescott, but with modest heroism he replied to him, as he had done to Putnam, that he came only as a volunteer, and would be happy to learn from a soldier of experience. Soon there appeared on the scene of action another patriotic volunteer who was enthusiastically received with huzzas from different parts of the field. This was none other than Putnam's comrade of twenty years before in the bloody battle of Lake George,—the dauntless Seth Pomeroy, now in his seventieth year. Having borrowed a neighbour's horse at his Northampton home, he had, despite feeble health, ridden a hundred miles and had arrived this very day at Cambridge. Leaving the borrowed horse out of harm's way, he walked over Charlestown Neck, regardless of the fire which swept it, and reached the Heights just as the enemy were preparing for the assault of the works. When Putnam caught sight of the old man, whose fighting days were supposed to be ended, striding gun in hand, up the hill, he shouted, "By God! Pomeroy, you here! A cannon-shot would waken you out of your grave!"



At this hour — nearly three o'clock in the afternoon — about three thousand British troops had landed on the Charlestown peninsula. With intense excitement the Americans watched the brilliant battalions of Grenadiers and Light Infantry forming on Moulton's Point into two divisions. The Grenadiers, the tallest and finest-looking men in the British army, who could be distinguished also by their high caps and other peculiarities in dress, were to lead in the attack. Soon the redoubled roar of artillery told that the ranks of veterans had been put in motion for the general assault. Presently the defenders of the rail-fence could see, through the smoke, the right wing of the enemy's force approaching slowly and steadily to drive them from their position and to cut off the retreat of the men in the redoubt, against which the left wing was advancing.

Putnam was all activity, riding up and down just behind the soldiers at the fence who rested their deadly weapons on the top rail and awaited with excited eagerness the order to fire. Says Reuben Kemp, one of this number :

“General Putnam seemed to have the ordering of things. He charged the men not to fire until the enemy came close to the works, and then to take good aim, and make every shot kill a man, and he told one officer to see that this order was obeyed.”

Philip Johnson relates of Putnam : “ I distinctly heard him say, ‘ Men, you are all marksmen — don't one of you fire until you see the white of their eyes.’ ” Other words of Putnam were repeated along the line by Knowlton and Reed and Stark to the men whose fingers were so impatient to pull the waiting trigger :



"Powder is scarce and must not be wasted." "Fire low." "Take aim at the waistbands." "You are all marksmen and could kill a squirrel at a hundred yards." "Reserve your fire and the enemy will all be destroyed." "Aim at the handsome coats." "Pick off the commanders."

While the soldiers awaited the nearer approach of the British, Captains Gridley and Callender were ordered to return the enemy's fire with their field-pieces. The former officer found difficulty in discharging his cannon, and on a plea that "nothing could be done with them," left the post, and most of his artillery company followed his example.

"General Putnam came to one of the pieces near which I stood," says Ezra Runnels, one of the men who did not desert, "and furiously inquired where our officers were. On being told our cartridges were too big and that the pieces could not be loaded, he swore, and said they could be loaded; taking a cartridge he broke it open, and loaded the pieces with a ladle, which were discharged; and assisted us in loading two or three times in that manner."

The guns, however, were soon disabled and were drawn to the rear. Callender, too, retreated in great haste with his cannon, but on reaching Bunker Hill he met Putnam, who, according to the contemporaneous account,

"ordered the officer to stop and go back; he replied he had no cartridges; the General dismounted and examined his boxes, and found a considerable number of cartridges, upon which he ordered him back; he refused, until the General threatened him with immediate death, upon which he returned." \*

\* This early account is based on a statement which Putnam himself made to a committee appointed, soon after the battle of Bunker Hill, by the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts, "to inquire into the misconduct of Capt. Callender." The report of the committee will be found in Force's *American Archives*, Fourth Series, vol. ii., p. 1438.

But Callender did not remain long this second time at the post. "His men," asserts Colonel Swett, "were disgusted with a part of the service they did not understand, most of them had muskets and mingled with the infantry, the pieces were entirely deserted, and the captain relinquished them." Putnam, on returning from Bunker Hill, whither he had gone to bring on some of the men who were intrenching there, came upon the abandoned cannon "at the foot of the hill." He demanded of the soldiers in the vicinity where the gunners were and was told that they had scattered. Captain John Ford's company of Bridge's regiment happened to be passing by and Putnam called upon them to draw the guns to the front.

"Our men utterly refused," declares a member of the company, "and said they had no knowledge of the use of artillery, and that they were ready to fight with their own arms. Captain Ford then addressed the company in a very animated, patriotic and brave strain, which is characteristic of the man; the company then seized the drag-ropes and soon drew them to the rail-fence, according to my recollection about half the distance from the redoubt on Breed's Hill to Mystic River."

Putnam now directed in person the discharges.

"He pointed the cannon himself," says Swett; "the balls took effect on the enemy, and one case of canister made a lane through them. With wonderful courage, however, the enemy closed their ranks, and coolly marched on to the attack."\*

The British Grenadiers were advancing directly in front, while the Light Infantry, in order to turn the

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\* The incidents of the removal of the field-pieces by Captain Ford's company to the rail-fence, and the firing of the cannon by Putnam, are placed by Colonel Swett, in the first edition of his history of the battle, just before the second assault by the British. In the second and third editions, he says that they

extreme left of the American force, moved along the shore of the Mystic River. When the enemy were seen deploying into line, a few of the men at the rail-fence could not resist the temptation to fire their muskets without orders. Instantly the General left the cannon and hastened to the spot.

“General Putnam appeared to be very angry,” narrates Private Reuben Kemp, “and passed along the lines quickly with his sword drawn, and threatened to stab any man that fired without orders.

“The enemy kept firing as they advanced, and when they had got pretty near the works, we were all ordered to take good aim and fire. All this time General Putnam was constantly passing backwards and forwards, from right to left, telling us the day was our own if we would only stick to it.”

Although the British, in a patriot officer's words, “fired their heaviest volleys of musketry with admirable coolness and regularity” their aim was too high, and consequently “almost every ball passed harmlessly over the Americans.” The royal troops were about eight rods distant when the Provincials, breathless and intent, received the “fatal order.” The blaze which poured upon the King's ranks was no less withering than that which had already strewed the ground in front of the redoubt with the dead and wounded. Another murderous discharge burst forth from the fence and, as the enemy recoiled in confusion, many of the Americans, being sharpshooters, picked out the British officers and exclaimed, “There! See

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occurred when the British were advancing the first time. This latter order of events is followed by Frothingham in his *Siege of Boston* and Ellis in his *History of the Battle of Bunker Hill*, and by other writers who have depended upon Swett for the principal facts.

that officer! Let us have a shot at him!" and then two or three would fire at the same time. Like the division which was on the retreat before Prescott and his men at the redoubt, this wing of the British army, after attempting to make a stand, was obliged to give way. On seeing the assailants retire, the Americans set up a shout, and some of them leaped over the fence with the intention of pursuing the enemy, but they were restrained by their officers.

While the "huzza of victory re-echoed through the American line," Putnam, confident that another attack would soon be made, rode to Bunker Hill and to the rear of it to urge on reinforcements. At the farther end of Charlestown Neck were gathered troops who dared not cross the isthmus on account of the cannon-balls that raked it.

"Putnam flew to the spot," chronicles Swett, "to overcome their fears and hurry them on before the enemy returned. He entreated, threatened, and encouraged them; lashing his horse with the flat of his sword, he rode backward and forward across the Neck, through the hottest fire, to convince them there was no danger. The balls, however, threw up clouds of dust about him, and the soldiers were perfectly convinced that he was invulnerable, but not equally conscious of being so themselves. Some of these troops, however, ventured over."

Putnam now started for the front with the men whom he had succeeded in getting across the Neck. On his way he tried to rally the reinforcements which had already reached Bunker Hill.

The men were disorganised and dispersed on the west side of the hill, and were covered by the summit from the fire. Putnam ordered them on to the lines.

"He entreated and threatened them," says Swett, "and some of the most cowardly he knocked down with his sword, but all



in vain. The men complained they had not their officers ; he offered to lead them on himself, but [they pleaded as an excuse for not following him that] ‘the cannon were deserted and they stood no chance without them.’ The battle indeed appeared here in all its horrors. The British musketry fired high and took effect on this elevated hill and it was completely exposed to the combined fire from the ships, batteries, and field-pieces.”

The British, under cover of their artillery, were advancing for the second assault. Putnam hastened forward to the rail-fence. Beyond the redoubt the flames were rising over Charlestown, which had been set on fire by shells thrown from Copp’s Hill and by a party of marines who had landed from the *Somerset* warship. Fortunately the wind drove away the huge clouds of smoke and gave the Americans a full view of the approaching enemy. The British marched in the same order as in the first attack ; their left wing was moving towards the redoubt and its earth breastwork, their right wing was coming on towards the rail-fence. The assailants were keeping up a steady fire as they advanced, but, behind the defences, the Americans had orders to reserve their fire until the columns should come even nearer than before. “I saw General Putnam,” states a Connecticut private who was at the rustic breastwork of green grass, “riding along the whole line and crying out, ‘Stick to your posts, men, and do your duty’ ; he was greatly exposed.”

When at length the redcoats were only six rods away, a sheet of fire belched from the fence with such fearful precision that whole platoons of the British were swept down. “General Putnam encouraged us very much,” relates a soldier, Samuel Jones, “and rode up and down behind us ; his horse was all of a



lather, and the battle was going on very hotly at the time."

"General Putnam came up to our Regiment," says another soldier, John Holden ; " he appeared very actively engaged in the action. One of the Regiment got down behind a haycock ; General Putnam rode up and cried, ' Gods curse him ! ruu him through if he won't fight ! ' gave him one or two blows with his sword and drove him into the ranks."

The Americans were kept steady by the intrepid General.

The enemy, staggering over their dead and wounded, closed their ranks and repeated their attack, but they were met by the same deliberate aim, and their troops broke before the terrific volleys. " By God ! " Putnam is said to have exclaimed, when he saw the King's men fall under the shower of bullets, " I never saw such a carnage of the human race." Three times General Howe, the commander of the right wing of the royal army, was left alone, so many of his staff fell around him. May not the reason why he was spared have been that many of the Provincials cherished the memory of his noble brother, the beloved Lord Howe, whom they had followed in the French and Indian War ? Major Small was among the British officers exposed to the American fire ; his life was saved by Putnam, as Small himself used to tell in after years. This is his story :

" I, with the other officers, was in front of the line to encourage the men ; we had advanced very near the works, undisturbed, when an irregular fire, like a *feu-de-joie*, was poured in upon us ; it was cruelly fatal. The troops fell back ; and when I looked to the right and left, I saw not one officer standing ; I glanced my eye to the enemy, and saw several young men

levelling their pieces at me ; I knew their excellence as marksmen, and I considered myself gone.

"At that moment, my old friend Putnam rushed forward, and striking up the muzzles of their pieces with his sword cried out, ' For God's sake, my lads, don't fire at that man ! I love him as I do my brother.' We were so near each other that I heard his words distinctly. He was obeyed ; I bowed, thanked him, and walked away unmolested." \*

After an heroic attempt to force the American lines,

\* This testimony by Small is contained in a letter dated " New York, 30th March, 1818," from Colonel John Trumbull, the painter of historic scenes of the American Revolution, to Daniel Putnam. Trumbull prefaces Small's story thus : " In the summer of 1786, I became acquainted, in London, with Col. John Small, of the British army, who had served in America many years, and had known General Putnam intimately, during the War of Canada, from 1756 to 1763. Looking at the picture [of the Battle of Bunker Hill] which I had almost completed, he said, ' I don't like the situation in which you have placed my old friend Putnam ; you have not done him justice. I wish you would alter that part of your picture, and introduce a circumstance which actually happened, and which I can never forget.' "

Then follows in Trumbull's letter the anecdote as given above.

Some writers have felt that the story of the saving of Small's life by Putnam wears too much the air of romance to be implicitly relied upon. In reply to such critics, these words of Daniel Webster in the *North American Review*, July, 1818, may be cited : " There is, and can be, no doubt that Col. Small has stated the fact ; and there is the positive declaration of Daniel Putnam, that his father mentioned the same occurrence to him shortly after it happened. Very probably there is one mistake into which Colonel Trumbull may have fallen. It was not at the *redoubt* that the incident happened, but at the *breast-work* or the *rail-fence*. Admitting this to have crept into the account given by Colonel Trumbull, the essential facts remain altogether uncontradicted."



GENERAL ISRAEL PUTNAM.  
AFTER THE PAINTING BY COLONEL TRUMBULL



the British were at length compelled to give way again before the defenders of the rail-fence. This time the enemy retreated in greater disorder than after the first attack. Some of them even ran to the boats for safety. The assailants under General Pigot were as precipitously driven back from the front of the redoubt. There was a continuous stream of fire on Breed's Hill, from Prescott's men, from the first discharge until the enemy broke and fled. The ground in front of the works was covered with the dead and dying. Putnam now rode again to the rear to hasten forward the scattered reinforcements and to attempt to carry out the plan of intrenching Bunker Hill. On meeting Colonel Gardiner's regiment on that eminence, he retained a part of the troops to labour on the works and ordered the rest to the rail-fence. Portions of other regiments arrived on the peninsula, but owing to the great confusion and excitement some of the men did not advance to the front.

Although some of the Americans had encouraged themselves with the hope that the British, after being obliged to retire twice with terrible loss, would not renew the attack, the enemy rallied and began to prepare for another attempt to carry the works by storm. General Clinton crossed the Charles River with reinforcements, and General Howe massed the columns for a more concentrated movement against the redoubt. From the American lines a part of the enemy's arrangements could be observed. The regulars were laying aside their knapsacks in order to advance in light order and charge with the bayonet. The artillery was being pushed forward to a position where it could take advantage of the gap between the breastwork and the rail-fence, and thus rake the interior of the redoubt.



The situation of Prescott and his men was desperate, owing to the scarcity of their ammunition, but they were determined to defend Breed's Hill to the last extremity. On came the enemy, this time in silence, the whole force advancing towards the redoubt. The patriots on the summit of the hill coolly reserved their fire until the British were within twenty yards and then, at the word of command, they delivered the deadly discharge. Many of the enemy fell. Lieutenant-Colonel James Abercrombie, at the head of the Grenadiers, was among the mortally wounded. While he was being borne to the rear by the men, he begged them to spare his old friend Putnam. "If you take General Putnam alive," he said, "don't hang him, for he's a brave man." \*

Under the galling fire of the British artillery, which sent their balls through the sallyport directly into the redoubt, the Americans were at a great disadvantage, in addition to the fact that their ammunition was soon expended. They tried to keep their assailants at bay by hurling stones, but this only revealed their weakness and filled the oncoming enemy with confidence. The regulars reached the redoubt and began scaling the works. The Provincials tried to resist with clubbed muskets, but, in the hand-to-hand fight, the bristling bayonets forced an entrance and the redcoats swarmed into the works. Prescott now gave the order to retreat, and his brave band pushed their way out of the redoubt, fighting as they went. Among the Americans who fell at this time was Warren. He had just left the redoubt when a bullet struck him in the forehead. Major

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\* London paper quoted in the *New England Chronicle*, Nov., 1775.



BATTLE OF BUNKER HILL.

FROM THE PAINTING BY COL. J. TRUMBULL.



Small is said to have parried the thrust of a soldier who was about to plunge his bayonet into the dying hero—a scene which is represented by Colonel John Trumbull in his well-known painting, *The Battle of Bunker Hill*.

Meanwhile Putnam, in the rear, was riding up and down the slope near the Neck, and shouting to the belated men to hurry to the front. "Press on, press on," were his excited orders, "our brethren are suffering, and will be cut off."

"The musket-balls," relates William Dickson, who belonged to one of the companies which was being hurried forward to make a stand, "flew very thick where Putnam was, nearly or quite on top of Bunker Hill. He did not seem to mind it. Putnam had a sword in his hand and hallooed to us to drive up."

The Americans at the rail-fence, whose right had been opened by the retreat of Prescott's men from the redoubt, rendered at this time very valuable service, for they defended their line with such bravery that the enemy could not cut off the soldiers who were making their way towards the Neck. At last, however, the Provincials under Stark, Reed, Knowlton, and the other officers at the rail-fence were compelled to leave their position, but they "gave ground," as was reported, "with more regularity than could have been expected of troops who had been no longer under discipline, and many of whom never before saw an engagement."

No sooner did Putnam, who was riding from point to point along the brow of Bunker Hill in the effort to urge forward reinforcements, become aware that the whole body of Americans were in full retreat from the front, than he attempted to force back the disordered

troops. But his commands were disobeyed, contradictory orders were given by different officers, and, amid the clouds of dust and smoke, the Americans continued on the retreat in great confusion. The General rode to the rear of the excited and struggling mass of men, and, waving his sword high in air, shouted in a stentorian voice, "Make a stand here!" "We can stop them yet!" "In God's name form and give them one shot more!" But the soldiers, regardless of Putnam's words, pressed past the unfinished works on Bunker Hill where he tried to rally them. "Halt, you damned cowards!" he yelled; "halt and give them another shot!" Then, as the men kept on towards the Neck, the fiery General, with the imprecation of "God curse ye!" upon the troops over whom he had no control, hurriedly dismounted his horse, determined to face the oncoming enemy.

"He took his stand near a field-piece,"—this act of Putnam we learn from Swett,—“and seemed resolved to brave the foe alone. His troops, however, felt it impossible to withstand the overwhelming force of the British bayonets; they left him. One sergeant only dared to stand by his general to the last; he was shot down, and the enemy's bayonets were just upon the general when he retired.”

One of the American cannon which had been used in the battle was dragged to the Neck during the retreat, and this opened on the British. The enemy, however, after taking possession of Bunker Hill with a "parade of triumph," did not follow up their success by pursuing the Americans farther and making an attack on Cambridge. They set to work throwing up a line of breastworks on the hill where Putnam had tried to rally his men. Meanwhile that



undaunted American General had succeeded in bringing most of the retreating Provincials to a halt on Winter Hill and Prospect Hill. It was at the latter place that Putnam seems to have learned for the first time that the noble Warren had been killed.

"The fate of Warren," says Daniel Putnam in his reminiscences of his father, "brought to his mind that of Lord Howe, who fell by his side seventeen years before, and to whom also he had given advice [about exposing his life]. I once asked my father if he knew any of the particulars of Warren's fate, or where or at what time he lost his life. 'Nothing,' he replied, 'except that Prescott told me he was in the redoubt braving the enemy when they stormed it,—but I never saw him after we parted before the battle began.'"

In the same letter, written in after years, Daniel Putnam gives an account of himself and the Inman family while the battle was in progress, and he also speaks of his father's bravery :

"Mrs. Inman had been all day expecting the British would embark troops from the bottom of the common in Boston, and land them near where the Lexington detachment was landed, and her attention had been chiefly directed to that quarter ; but the furious discharge of musketry made it evident they had gone out some other way, and were engaged in a battle, the issue or consequences of which could not be foreseen. The day was drawing towards its close, and dreading the horrors that might overwhelm her family in the night, everything was put in requisition for a hasty removal ; but it was after sunset, and not until it had been ascertained at Cambridge that the British had gained possession of Charlestown Heights, with a loss on both sides that none pretended to calculate, that we passed through the scene of confusion there visible, on our way to Brush Hill.

"We were hastily and but imperfectly accoutred for the jaunt, so that it was midnight before we reached our destination. On the way, we learned from people who passed us

(some of whom had been in the battle or claimed to have been so) that General Putnam was safe; but his escape was considered miraculous, for wonderful tales were told us of the dangers with which he had been surrounded, and the unconcern he appeared to feel when they were the greatest."

Putnam's activity at the rail-fence and near the redoubt in encouraging the men and commanding them not to waste their powder, but to wait before firing until they saw the white of the enemy's eyes, the authority which he exercised in withdrawing men with intrenching tools from Prescott to throw up earth-works on the second eminence, his repeated trips across Charlestown Neck to obtain reinforcements, his attempts to rally the men during the retreat, and his orders after the troops came to a halt on Prospect and Winter hills are all evidences that he was the foremost leader in different parts of the field, and yet the question as to who really had the chief command in the battle has been the subject of much controversy.\* The uselessness of prolonged debate over the matter appears at once when the fact is taken into consideration that the work of the battle was largely the work of distinct bodies of men, not yet organised into one army. In this unorganised state of military affairs, Ward was in a certain way considered the principal general because he was in charge of the largest number of troops, those of Massachusetts. In the battle itself, Warren was the ranking officer on the field, but as he

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\* A bibliography relating to the question of the command in the Battle of Bunker Hill will be found in Appendix II. in this book.

A series of interesting articles on the subject of the command, by Rev. A. P. Putnam, D.D., was published in the *Danvers* (Mass.) *Mirror* in 1896.



**GENERAL ISRAEL PUTNAM.**  
FROM THE PAINTING BY J. WILKINSON.



expressly declined the command, it left Putnam the ranking officer ; and the latter held in a vague, unmilitary fashion the position of chief of the grand division of which Prescott's command was a part. It has been pertinently remarked that the question of the chief command would be more important had the battle of Bunker Hill been characterised by any grand tactics. As no special generalship was involved, and the significance of the battle lay in its moral effects, the question has little interest except for local patriots. The controversy is really at bottom one of rivalry between Massachusetts and Connecticut. The important service which Putnam rendered at Bunker Hill in the patriotic cause is emphatically stated by Washington Irving in a noteworthy paragraph. After mentioning the conspicuous part taken in the battle by Prescott, who was unquestionably in immediate charge of the detachment which built and defended the redoubt, he pays this glowing and deserved tribute to Putnam :

“ Putnam also was a leading spirit throughout the affair ; one of the first to prompt and one of the last to maintain it. He appears to have been active and efficient at every point ; sometimes fortifying ; sometimes hurrying up reinforcements ; inspiring the men by his presence while they were able to maintain their ground, and fighting gallantly at the outpost to cover their retreat. The brave old man, riding about in the heat of the action, on this sultry day, ‘ with a hanger belted across his brawny shoulders, over a waistcoat without sleeves,’ has been sneered at by a contemporary, as ‘ much fitter to head a band of sickle men or ditchers than musketeers.’ But this very description illustrates his character, and identifies him with the times and the service. A yeoman fresh from the plough, in the garb of rural labour ; a patriot brave and generous, but rough and ready, who thought not of himself in time of danger, but was ready to serve in any way, and to sacrifice official rank



and self-glorification to the good of the cause. He was eminently a soldier for the occasion. His name has long been a favourite one with young and old; one of the talismanic names of the Revolution, the very mention of which is like the sound of a trumpet. Such names are the precious jewels of our history, to be garnered up among the treasures of the nation, and kept immaculate from the tarnishing breath of the cynic and the doubter." \*

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\* *The Life of George Washington.*





## CHAPTER XVIII

### BESIEGING BOSTON

1775-1776



N occupying Prospect Hill on the retreat from the Charlestown Heights, Putnam acted on his own responsibility, as appears from a statement which he afterwards made.

"Pray," he wrote to the Cambridge Committee of Safety, "did I not take possession of Prospect Hill the very night after the fight on Bunker Hill, without having any orders from any person? And was not I the only general officer that tarried there? The taking of said hill I never could obtain leave for before, which is allowed by the best judges was the salvation of Cambridge, if not of the country." \*

This prompt occupation of Prospect Hill was in keeping with Putnam's purpose to resist at every point; and the ultimate value of this position was, as a military critic has pointed out,

"very determining in its relations to the siege. Its advanced flanking posts of Lechmere Point, Cobble Hill, and Ploughed Hill, afterwards developed by General Washington, combined their cross-fire, and thus sealed Charlestown Neck. A protracted

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\* Letter dated New York, May 22, 1776.

halt on Bunker Hill would have been fatal to the whole detachment; but his [Putnam's] occupation of Prospect Hill was eminently judicious." \*

The soldiers whom Putnam had ordered, immediately after the battle, to take post on Prospect Hill began throwing up defences, and continued at this task until they were relieved during the night by a reinforcement which he obtained. Here the lad Daniel arrived the next morning, — Sunday, June 18th, — having obtained permission from the Inmans to leave Brush Hill, whither he had accompanied them the previous evening. He describes his search for his father and how the General was occupied when he found him :

"I was not long in retracing my steps of the last night [June 17] back [from Brush Hill] to Cambridge. Genl. Putnam was not at his quarters; he had been there, it was said, for a few minutes only, and with fresh men was then fortifying Prospect Hill. There I found him about ten o'clock on the morning of the 18th of June, dashing about among the workmen throwing up intrenchments, and often placing a sod with his own hands. He wore the same clothes he had on when I left him, thirty-eight hours before, and affirmed he had neither put them off nor washed himself since; and we might well believe him, for the aspect of all bore evidence that he spoke the truth.

"I joined my entreaty to the earnest request of every officer round him that he would go to his quarters and take some refreshment and rest. He inquired what had become of Mrs. Inman? I told him where I had left her in safety, and we went home together."

The energetic Putnam could not remain quiet long at Cambridge while the British cannon threatened the works which were being built. He soon returned to

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\* Gen. H. B. Carrington in his *Battles of the American Revolution*, Fifth Edition, vol. i., p. 111.

resume as active command as ever. He was, as before, on horseback, and in a few minutes' space of time could be at any part of the heights where the men were digging. Works were vigorously carried on not only at Prospect Hill but also at Winter Hill, where the New Hampshire troops and some Connecticut men had made a stand on the night of the battle, and had flung up by morning an intrenchment about an hundred yards square under Putnam's directions.\* Nearly four thousand troops were soon stationed on or near Prospect Hill, including eight Massachusetts regiments, the officers of which had orders from General Ward not to leave their posts without permission from Putnam. During the two weeks which followed the battle of Bunker Hill, Putnam was exceedingly busy in forwarding the completion of the fortifications. The bluff farmer-General had no patience with any of the officers who were not ready to share the labour of the men at a time when speed in finishing the defences was imperative. Once he rebuked a dilatory private by an ironical allusion to those officers who were sticklers for mere military formalities. The incident is narrated by a soldier named Harvey :

"On one occasion General Putnam came along near where I was at work, and, seeing a quantity of sods which had just been brought up, he addressed himself to one of the men, directing him to place them on the wall, remarking at the same time, 'You are a soldier, I suppose?' The order not being executed on the instant, the General added, 'Oh ! I see you are an officer !' and immediately took hold and placed the sods himself.

"Meanwhile," adds Harvey, "the balls were continually

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\* Diary of Lieut.-Col. Experience Storrs of the 3rd (Putnam's) Connecticut Regiment.

pouring in from the British forts, sometimes killing our men, and sometimes tearing our works; but they went forward nevertheless, and were soon in a condition to return the compliment."

Sunday, July 2nd, was an eventful day for the patriot soldiers around Boston. About two o'clock in the afternoon General George Washington, whom the Continental Congress had appointed Commander-in-chief of all the American troops, reached Cambridge, having made the journey from Philadelphia, on horseback, in about ten days. Putnam was one of the officers who exchanged personal greetings with Washington at the house of President Langdon which, "excepting one room reserved by the president for his own use," had been "prepared and furnished for the reception of the Commander-in-chief." Between the Virginia chieftain and the Connecticut veteran now began a friendship, of which Dr. Albigece Waldo wrote in 1818 :

"Washington and Putnam were unknown to each other until they met at Cambridge. The open, undisguised frankness of the latter, together with his great activity and personal industry in everything pertaining to the army, soon attracted the attention of the former; an early intimacy was formed and a firm friendship established, which continued undisturbed during the whole period they were associated in service."

On the morning after his arrival, Washington, accompanied by Putnam and other officers, rode from his headquarters to Cambridge Common, where the troops were drawn up. There, under the branches of an elm, he wheeled his horse, drew his sword, and formally assumed command of the Continental army. This ceremony over, he made a tour of the different Ameri-



can posts, and on reaching Prospect Hill he was greatly impressed by what Putnam had accomplished on that important height, which commanded a wide view over Boston and the surrounding country. A contemporary of the energetic and efficient Connecticut General testifies :

“ It was not in Putnam’s nature to be idle ; inured to habits of industry himself, no man was better calculated to make others so, and Washington, observing the great progress that had been made in a short time in raising the work of defence, said to him, ‘ You seem to have the faculty, General Putnam, of infusing your own industrious spirit into all the workmen you employ.’ ”

On July 4th,—just one year before the memorable day of the Declaration of Independence,—Washington issued the following in General Orders : \*

“ The Hon. Artemas Ward, Charles Lee, Philip Schuyler, and Israel Putnam, Esq<sup>s</sup>., are appointed majors-general in the American army, by the honorable Continental Congress, and due obedience is to be paid them as such.”

A few days later, the names of eight brigadier-generals whom Congress had chosen were formally announced. They were Seth Pomeroy, Richard Montgomery, David Wooster, William Heath, Joseph Spencer, John Thomas, John Sullivan, and Nathanael Greene. Trouble brewed in camp in relation to some of the appointments, especially because Putnam had been advanced over Spencer, and Pomeroy over Thomas. It is interesting to have Washington’s account of the controversy. In a letter dated July 10, 1775, he writes to the Continental Congress thus :

\* General Orders printed in the *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, vol. xv., p. 114.

“I am sorry to observe that the Appointments of the General Officers in the Province of Massachusetts Bay have by no Means corresponded with the Judgement and Wishes of either the civil or Military. The great Dissatisfaction expressed on this Subject and the apparent Danger of throwing the Army into the utmost Disorder, together with the strong Representations of the Provincial Congress, have induced me to retain the Commissions in my Hands untill the Pleasure of the Congress should be farther known (except General Puttnam’s which was given the Day I came into Camp and before I was apprized of these Uneasinesses). In such a Step I must beg the Congress will do me the Justice I believe, that I have been actuated solely by a Regard to the publick Good. I have not, nor could have any private Attachments ; every Gentleman in Appointment was an entire Stranger to me but from Character. I must therefore rely upon the Candor of the Congress for their favorable Construction of my Conduct in this Particular. General Spencer was so much disgusted at the preference given to General Puttnam that he left the Army without visiting me, or making known his Intentions in any respect.” \*

Silas Deane, the Connecticut delegate, who heard these words of Washington read before the Congress at Philadelphia, says, in a letter written soon afterwards, that the members greatly disapproved of Spencer’s conduct. The same writer was elated by the honour won for his colony and the country by the “brave intrepidity of old General Putnam” on “whom by every account the whole Army has depended ever since the Lexington battle,” and who was now promoted to the rank of Major-General. With high pride Deane penned :

“Putnam’s merit rung through this Continent ; his fame still increases,—and every day justifies the unanimous applause of

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\* *Writings of George Washington*, ed. by W. C. Ford, vol. iii., p. 14.

*Israel Putnam*

I, the said *Israel Putnam*, do swear, that I will support the said United States, against the said King of Great Britain, his Heirs and Successors, and all those who adhere to him, and will serve the said United States in the Office of *Major General*, as I now hold, with Fidelity, according to the best of my Skill and Understanding. So help me God.

*General Putnam*

Head-Quarters, Boston, Nov. 3, 1775.

PERSONALLY appeared the Honorable *Israel Putnam*, Captain of the Continental Army, and took the above Oath by him subscribed.

Before me

GENERAL PUTNAM'S OATH OF ALLEGIANCE.



the continent. Let it be remembered, he had every vote of the Congress; and his health has been the second or third at almost all our tables in this city. But it seems that he does not wear a large wig, nor screw his countenance into a form that belies the sentiments of his generous soul; he is no adept either at political or religious canting and cozening; he is no shake-hand body; he therefore is totally unfit for everything but fighting; that department I never heard that these intriguing gentry wanted to interfere with him in. I have scarce any patience. O Heaven! blast, I implore thee, every such low, narrow, selfish, envious manœuvre in the land, nor let one such succeed far enough to stain the fair page of American patriotic politics." \*

The principal officers at Cambridge had little sympathy for Spencer, as appears in a letter by Deane's step-son, Lieutenant Samuel B. Webb:

"You'll find the Generals Washington and Lee [Charles Lee had accompanied Washington from Philadelphia to Cambridge] are vastly fonder and think higher of Putnam than any man in the army; and he truly is the Hero of the day."

"I find," continues Webb to Deane, "the intention of Spencer was to get our [Connecticut] Assembly to remonstrate to the Continental Congress and beg a re-appointment; but little did he think that this could not be done without cashiering Putnam,—as he is in possession of his commission; and better for us to lose four Spencers than half a Putnam." †

The affair with Spencer was finally settled by his consenting to return to the army and to take rank after Putnam.

During nearly the whole of July, Putnam continued

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\* Deane Papers in *Collections of the Connecticut Historical Society*, vol. ii.; *Collections of the New York Historical Society*, vol. xix.

† *Correspondence and Journals of Samuel Blachley Webb*, ed. by W. C. Ford, vol. i.



in chief command of the troops at Prospect Hill. Several characteristic incidents are said to have occurred here. One day, having summoned all his captains to headquarters, Putnam announced that he wished one from their number to take charge of a secret and hazardous undertaking. Captain Foster, of Mansfield's Massachusetts regiment, "after waiting a short time for his seniors to have an opportunity to offer their services," stepped forward, eager to signalise himself. Six or eight men were drafted from each company, and at the appointed time the party, fully armed and equipped, appeared before Putnam's tent for further orders. The bluff old General came out and reviewed them in due form. He commended their spirit and good appearance and then, much to their surprise, ordered them to lay aside their arms and equipments, provide themselves with axes, and go into a neighbouring swamp and cut a quantity of fascines which they were to bring in upon their shoulders. And so these men, who had "expected to gain honour by their cheerful exposure to unknown dangers and hardships," found—in the concluding words of William Cutter, the narrator of this story of the good-natured and fun-loving commander—that "their greatest danger was from the attacks of the musquitoes, and their greatest exposure was to the mirth of their fellow-soldiers."

Another incident is told by the same writer. It appears that Putnam, whose experiences in the French and Indian War had made him an adept in handling boats, undertook to train in person some of the men for the management of the numerous craft which were kept in readiness in the Charles River preparatory to a possible attack on Boston. On a certain day, when the men were at practice, manœuvring under his direction, a

General Putnam presents his most respectful Compliments  
to Col. Clinch and the rest of the gentlemen and is much  
obliged to them for the pick they sent him always to send me

the words you sent to me about last night. you may send  
in to Brunswick when it is most convenient for you when  
you can with me time after time for Liberty for them to go in  
and now he wants to know where they are. I don't like such shipping  
but would have you send them in at all Equators

I am sir with the greatest respects

your humble servant

Israel Putnam

to Col. Clinch



smaller boat, the occupants of which were either heedless of orders or unskilful in rowing, ran athwart the course of the one in which Putnam was. In order to teach a much-needed lesson, he did not change his course or attempt to check his speed, but, as the story goes,

“ran the disorderly shallop down, staving in her side, and tumbling her whole crew into the water. Having completed the movement he had ordered, the delinquents were all carefully picked up, and cautioned to be, for the future, more attentive to the word of command.”

A day of special interest at Prospect Hill was Tuesday, July 18th, the date of the first flag-raising of the American Revolution. The occasion was the reading of the declaration which the Continental Congress had recently adopted, “setting forth the causes and necessity of their taking up arms.” The troops at Cambridge had been paraded, three days before, to listen to this manifesto, and now a morning was set apart that it might be read to Putnam’s division of the army. There are several contemporaneous allusions to the event. This account was published in the *Essex Gazette* of July 19, 1775 :

“Yesterday morning according to orders issued the day before by Major-General Putnam, all the Continental troops under his immediate command assembled on Prospect Hill, when the declaration of the Continental Congress was read, after which an animated and pathetic address to the army was made by the Reverend Mr. Leonard, chaplain to General Putnam’s regiment, and succeeded by a pertinent prayer ; then General Putnam gave the signal, and the whole army shouted their loud Amen by three cheers ; upon which a cannon was fired from the fort, and the standard lately sent to General Putnam was exhibited, flourishing in the air, bearing on one

side this motto, "An Appeal to Heaven," and on the other side, "Qui Transtulit Sustinet." The whole was conducted with the utmost decency, good order and regularity and to the universal acceptance of all present. And the Philistines on Bunker's Hill heard the shout of the Israelites and, being very fearful, paraded themselves in battle array."

The scarlet standard with its letters and armourial bearings in gold was called Putnam's flag, being the one which the General Assembly of Connecticut had ordered for the 3rd Regiment of the colony. Washington is said to have acted as presenter at this unfurling on Prospect Hill. Captain James Dana, who was chosen to receive the flag and to display it, was warned "that in so doing he must not let the colours fall, as that would be deemed ominous of the fall of America."\* It is further related that the great six-foot captain, who could face a hostile army without flinching, shrank like a child from this display and fain would have declined the honour, but Putnam cheered him on by blunt words of humour and a friendly clap on the shoulder; whereupon Captain Dana advanced and received the flag from Washington's aide and carried it three times around the interior circle of the parade amid great applause by the soldiers.

Washington, from the time of his arrival at Cambridge, had devoted solicitous attention not only to strengthening the defences, but also to reorganising the army. By a new arrangement, which dated from July 22, 1755, the soldiers from the same colony, as far as practicable, were brought together. The right wing of the army was placed under the command of General Ward, who accordingly removed his head-

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\* Larned, *History of Windham County, Conn.*, vol. ii.



quarters from Cambridge to Roxbury, where he had under him Brigadier-Generals Thomas and Spencer. The left wing of the army was assigned to General Lee. This division consisted of two brigades, the one at Prospect Hill being put under Brigadier-General Greene, and the other at Winter Hill under Brigadier-General Sullivan. Putnam himself was transferred from Prospect Hill to the command of the centre division at Cambridge, and, like Ward and Lee, had two brigades, or twelve regiments, under him.

Putnam's two aides-de-camp, appointed at this time, were his eldest son, Israel, and young Samuel B. Webb. Said the latter, when writing to his step-father, Silas Deane, through whose influence the appointment had been obtained :

“General Putnam is a man highly esteemed with us. . . . Since which [appointment as Aide to Putnam] I have had the offer of being a Brigade Major from General Gates. They are both Honorable and agreeable posts. I shall for the present remain with General Putnam.”

As aide to Putnam, Webb wrote nearly all the letters that went out with the General's signature.

The men who, by the new arrangement of the army in July, belonged to the brigades under Putnam considered themselves very fortunate, for it has not been too strongly asserted by Worthington Chauncey Ford that

“at this time the opportunity of serving under ‘Old Put’ was something to be desired. He was the most popular of the commanding officers. His bluff and hearty ways were better suited to win the confidence of the newly-formed army than the cold and distant manners of the other generals. The soldiers could appreciate Putnam and he was the toast of the camp.”

The Inman house, which had not been occupied since the family of the loyalist Ralph Inman left it on the night after the battle of Bunker Hill, now became the new headquarters of Putnam. "It could not have been better situated in a military view," truly remarks the antiquarian Drake, in telling the story of this historic house, "for Old Put's residence."

"The General's own regiment," he continues, "and most of the Connecticut troops lay encamped near at hand in Inman's green fields and fragrant pine woods. It was but a short gallop to the commander-in-chief's, or to the posts on the river. Remove all the houses that now intervene between Inman Street and the Charles, and we see that the gallant old man had crouched as near the enemy as it was possible for him to do, and lay like a watch-dog at the door of the American lines." \*

But Putnam's vigilance lest the British troops should make an aggressive movement, and his strenuous devotion to the American cause, did not obliterate his personal attachment to some of the King's officers, who had been his comrades in the war with the French and Indians. He gladly welcomed, therefore, the opportunity, soon after the battle of Bunker Hill, for an interview with Major Small on the lines between the Charlestown Heights and Prospect Hill. It appears that this meeting, under a flag of truce, was brought about by the urgent request of Small, who wished to express personally to his old friend his deep gratitude for that timely interference which had saved his life in the recent engagement.

The effects of the siege soon began to be felt in Boston, for the royal soldiers, owing to the limited

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\* S. A. Drake, *Historic Mansions and Highways Around Boston*.

supply of other provisions, were compelled to live almost exclusively on salt pork and fish. Even the sick and wounded were subjected to this unhygienic diet. Reports of the extremity in town having reached the Cambridge camp, Putnam, in sympathy for the sufferers, both regular and Provincial, sent supplies at once to some of the British officers as well as to the American prisoners. The following note was dated August 8th :

“General Putnam’s compliments to his old friend Major Moncrieffe. Is sorry he could not sooner send him some of the comforts of life. He now sends him (through the hands of Major Bruce) some mutton, beef, and fresh butter, which he begs his acceptance of, with a hearty welcome.” \*

A British officer in Boston wrote to his father in London, thus :

“Why should I complain of hard fate? General Gage and all his family have for this month past lived upon salt provisions. Last Saturday General Putnam, in the true style of military complaisance, which abolishes all personal resentment and smooths the horrors of war when discipline will permit, sent a present to the General’s lady of a fine fresh quarter of veal, which was very acceptable, and received the return of a very polite card of thanks.” †

Not yet was a revolution involving separation from the mother country thought of by the mass of American colonists. The members of the Continental Congress had expressly declared, “We mean not to dissolve that union which has so long and so happily subsisted between us.” It has been truly said of the majority of

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\* *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, vol. xiv., p. 269.

† Extract from a London paper, quoted in Frank Moore’s *Diary of the American Revolution*, vol. i., p. 136.

partiotic leaders that the most they hoped for was that, by offering a stout resistance to an enforcement of the ministerial policy, they could compel a change in that policy and enjoy all that they demanded under the English constitution. Putnam had a different opinion in regard to the matter, as his son Daniel interestingly states :

“Without any wish for ‘reconciliation,’ he [Putnam] believed that Britain would persevere in her demands, and that America had no alternative but submission or a long, protracted resistance. In support of this remark I beg leave to relate an anecdote of which I was myself a witness.

“From the arrival of Washington at Cambridge till the enemy left Boston, his and Putnam’s military families were not only on the most friendly terms, but their intercourse was very frequent. Not a week passed but they dined together at the quarters of one or the other. One day in the month of September, [1775,] Genl. Washington at his table gave for a toast,—‘A speedy and honourable peace,’ and all appeared to join with good will in the sentiment. Not many days after, at Putnam’s quarters, addressing himself to Washington, he said,—‘Your Excellency the other day gave us “a speedy and honourable peace,” and I, as in duty bound, drank it ; and now, I hope, Sir, you will not think it an act of insubordination if I ask you to drink one of rather a different character : I will give you, Sir, “A long and a moderate war.”’ It has been truly said of Washington that he seldom smiled and almost never laughed, but the sober and sententious manner in which Putnam delivered his sentiment, and its seeming contradiction to all his practice, came so unexpectedly on Washington that he did laugh more heartily than I ever remember to have seen him before or after ; but presently he said, ‘You are the last man, Genl. Putnam, from whom I should have expected such a toast, you who are all the time urging vigorous measures, to plead now for a *long*, and what is still more extraordinary, a *moderate*, war, seems strange indeed.’ Putnam replied that the measures he advised were calculated to prevent, not hasten, a peace



which would be only a rotten thing and last no longer than it divided us. 'I expected nothing' [said Putnam] 'but a *long* war, and I would have it a *moderate* one, that we may hold out till the mother country becomes willing to cast us off forever.' Washington did not soon forget this toast; for years after, and more than once, he reminded Putnam of it."

The limited supply of cannon and ammunition and the undisciplined condition of the army compelled Washington, despite his desire to drive the enemy from Boston by "some decisive stroke," to pursue in the autumn, as in the summer, an inactive, defensive policy. At this period of the siege, Mrs. Putnam made the journey from Connecticut to visit her husband, and she was still in Cambridge, later in 1775, at the time of the arrival of Mrs. Washington, who was accompanied by Mrs. Gates, wife of Adjutant-General Horatio Gates, and by other companions. The presence of the ladies gladdened the hearts of their husbands in the gloomy monotony of camp life. In the frequent interchange of hospitalities, Mrs. Putnam was a most cordial hostess at the Inman house. The Inman family coach, which had been standing idle since the loyalist owner fled to Boston, leaving the stable provided with horses and handsome equipages, was now ordered out by Putnam for his wife's use in making calls and taking drives into the country. Certain Cambridge authorities, claiming that such appropriation of confiscated property was unwarranted, had the presumption, on one occasion when Mrs. Putnam was at a distance from home, to compel her to alight from the carriage. 'The General was "not of a temper to submit very meekly to such an affront," \* and on

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\* *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, vol. xxv., July, 1871, p. 232.



learning of the ungallant treatment which his wife had received, gave vent to his indignation in English more forceful than elegant. In reply to his remonstrance, the offenders afterwards wrote :

“ Nothing was ever aimed at treating you or yours unbecomingly the many obligations that we are under for the extraordinary services you have done to this town [Cambridge] which must always be acknowledged with the highest gratitude, not only by us, but by rising generations.” \*

The American camp and colonies were thrown into much excitement in October by the discovery of the treason of Dr. Benjamin Church, surgeon-general of the military hospital, who had borne the character of a distinguished patriot. For several weeks he had carried on a secret correspondence with the enemy, but finally a letter in cipher, which he intended to be delivered to the commander of a British war-vessel in Newport Harbour, was intercepted. A woman who had acted as bearer of the letter part of the way returned to Cambridge, supposing that she had entrusted it to safe hands. No sooner was she suspected of being a spy than Putnam himself undertook her arrest. Tradition tells how Washington was looking from the chamber of his headquarters at the Craigie house when he beheld the General approaching in great speed on horseback with the stout lady *en croupe* behind him. Not even the Commander-in-chief could keep from laughing at the ludicrous sight presented by the sturdy “ Wolf-hunter ” and his prize; and he hardly had time to recover his gravity before the front door was thrown open and the culprit was made to enter the hall by the strong arm of her escort. From the head of the broad

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\* Letter dated June 18, 1776.

staircase, Washington, in as stern a tone as he could assume, warned her that nothing but a full confession could save her from a halter. She told in detail the story of Dr. Church's treachery ; and he was forthwith arrested, tried, and imprisoned.

For the winter campaign a reorganisation of the army was imperative, for the terms of enlistment of many of the soldiers would expire in December or at the beginning of the new year. A committee of three, —Dr. Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania, Col. Benjamin Harrison of Virginia, and the Hon. Thomas Lynch of South Carolina,—whom the Continental Congress had appointed to consult in person with Washington and his generals as well as with delegates from New England colonies in relation to the "continuance and new-modelling" of the army, arrived in the Cambridge camp on October 15th. Putnam now met some of the foremost patriots of the time. We can well imagine what hearty greeting he gave the distinguished visitors ; and they must have found great pleasure in becoming personally acquainted with the hero whose services to the country had already won for him a high place in their esteem.

To the American camp came also in October the Rev. Jeremy Belknap, pastor of the First Parish in Dover, N. H., who has left some interesting notes of his visit to the several generals. Under date of October 19th, there is this entry in his journal : \*

"After dining with General Ward [at Roxbury], I returned to Cambridge. In the evening, visited and conversed with General Putnam. Ward appears to be a calm, cool, and thoughtful man ; Putnam a rough fiery genius."

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\* Belknap's journal is printed in the *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, vol. iv.

On October 20th, Pastor Belknap, in characterising Lee, mentions Putnam again :

“General Lee is a perfect original, a good scholar and soldier, and an odd genius ; full of fire and passion and but little good manners ; a great sloven, wretchedly profane, and a great admirer of dogs of which he had two at dinner with him, one of them a native of Pomerania which I should have taken for a bear had I seen him in the woods.

“A letter which he wrote General Putnam yesterday is a copy of his odd mind. It is, as nearly as I can recollect, as follows, being a letter of introduction of one Page, a Church clergyman :—

“ ‘ HOBGOBLIN HALL, Oct, 19, 1775.

“ ‘ DEAR GENERAL,—Mr. Page, the bearer of this, is a Mr. Page. He has the laudable ambition of seeing the great General Putnam. I therefore desire you would array yourself in all your majesty and terrors for his reception. Your blue and gold must be mounted, your pistols stuck in your girdle ; and it would not be amiss if you should black one half of your face.

“ ‘ I am dear general, with fear and trembling, your humble servant,

“ ‘ CHARLES LEE.’ ”

The letter which Belknap quotes must have seemed harmless drollery to the bearer, but it was doubtless intended to convey to the quick-witted Putnam a covert warning that he should be on his guard against the Rev. Mr. Page, who was suspected of being a spy. Certainly, in ending the letter, Lee took an original way of telling Putnam to “ keep dark ” in the presence of his visitor.

As the days passed away, the Revolutionary leaders guarded more assiduously than ever against an advance of the King’s troops from Boston. Meanwhile, across the ocean, the debates in the English Parliament waxed

warm over the necessity of asserting the royal prerogative by an active campaign in America. Edmund Burke, the eloquent champion of the colonies, sarcastically rebuked his fellow-Commoners who extolled the strength of the British force in Boston. Having mentioned the American generals, Washington, Lee, and Putnam by name, he exclaimed in Parliament: "These men know much more of your army than your return can give them. They coop it up, besiege it, destroy it, crush it! Your officers are swept off by the rifles if they show their noses!" \*

Although the marauding parties which the British occasionally sent out from Boston were quickly driven back into the town by the besiegers, Washington took added precautions in November against a general attack on his lines, for after the cold weather set in there was the possibility that the enemy would make approaches on the ice. A strong detachment under Putnam was accordingly ordered, on the night of the 23rd, to break ground at Cobble Hill. The men laboured until dawn and then retired without having received a single shot from Bunker Hill or the floating batteries. An intrenching party, which General Heath commanded, continued the works on the following night and was also unmolested. In fact, the Cobble Hill fortification was finished early in December "without the least interruption from the enemy." The *New England Chronicle or Essex Gazette*, in its issue of December 14, 1775, said of this stronghold :

"It is allowed to be the most perfect piece of fortification that the American army has constructed during the present campaign, and on the day of its completion was named Putnam's impregnable fortress."

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\* Force, *American Archives*, Fourth Series, vol. vi., p. 100.



A writer in *Silliman's Journal* in 1822, in commenting on this appellation, "impregnable fortress," truly remarks:

"Every fort which was defended by that General [Putnam] might be considered as impregnable, if daring courage and intrepidity could always resist superior force."

For the defence of the different American posts, additional cannon and ammunition were sorely needed. This crying want was supplied, in part, by the fortunate capture of several British warships. On board the ordnance-brig *Nancy*, which Captain Manly, commander of the American armed schooner *Lee*, compelled to surrender, was a large and valuable assortment of military stores. These trophies, including a thirteen-inch brass mortar, which weighed nearly three thousand pounds, were carried to Cambridge. There the mortar was placed in front of the laboratory on the Common, and the popular and unconventional Putnam took a leading part in the jubilation. Colonel Stephen Moylan, in describing the happy occasion, wrote to Colonel Joseph Reed on Monday, December 5th:

"I would have given a good deal that you was here [Cambridge] last Saturday when the stores arrived at camp; such universal joy ran through the whole as if each grasped victory in his hand; to crown the glorious scene there intervened one truly ludicrous, which was Old Put mounted on the large mortar which was fixed in its bed for the occasion, with a bottle of rum in his hand, standing parson to christen, while godfather Mifflin, [Quartermaster-General Thomas Mifflin] gave it the name of *Congress*. The huzzas on the occasion I dare say were heard through all the territories of our most gracious sovereign in this Province." \*

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\* *Life and Correspondence of Joseph Reed*, by W. B. Reed, vol. i., p. 133.



Strong works were planned for construction at Lechmere's Point, and thither Putnam went, on the morning of December 17th, with three or four hundred men to break ground near the waterside within half a mile of a British man-of-war.

"The mist," says a contemporaneous narrator of the expedition, "was so great as to prevent the enemy from discovering what he [Putnam] was about, until twelve, when it cleared up, and opened to their view our whole party at the point, and another at the causeway, throwing a new bridge over the creek that forms the Island at high water. The *Scarborough* ship-of-war which lay off the point, immediately poured in upon our men a broadside. The enemy, from Boston, threw many shells, and obliged us to decamp from the point, with two men badly wounded. The bridge, however, was ordered to be raised by the brave old General, and was completed. The garrison of Cobble Hill were ordered to return the ship's fire ; which they did, and soon obliged her to heave tight upon her springs, and to cease firing. But the battery in New-Boston kept up the fire of shells till twelve o'clock that night. Our party at the point renewed their work in the evening, and continued it all night. This morning [December 18], at day-light, by a signal of two rockets from Boston, the *Scarborough* weighed anchor, and has left the point clear." \*

Although the spadesmen, after resuming work, were exposed to a renewed discharge of shot and shells from the enemy's land batteries, they kept steadily at their task. Most of the intrenching, during several successive days, was done under the immediate direction of General Heath, for Putnam's duties required his presence elsewhere a part of the time. The latter, however, made frequent visits to Lechmere's Point to inspect the progress of the work. It appears that Putnam's eldest

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\* Force, *American Archives*, Fourth Series, vol. iv., p. 313.

son was assigned to the command of a squad of the workmen here. Cutter \* relates this incident :

“ As some of his [Captain Israel Putnam, Jr.] men were one day reclining upon the greensward, taking some refreshments, the General [Putnam] coming along, cried out—‘ Up in a moment, or you are all dead men ! ’ They started up at the word, and hastened to their work. No sooner had they cleared the way, than a ball from the enemy ploughed the ground where they had been lying, and buried itself deep in the earth. It was thus necessary to keep a watchful eye to the side of the enemy and to labour in a constant expectation of an iron mandate to abandon the work.”

In December some of the Connecticut troops caused much trouble in camp by their “ extraordinary and reprehensible conduct.” Those whose time of enlistment expired the first of that month were very uneasy to leave for home, and some of them did so, contrary to Washington’s orders for them to stay in the service a little longer until a sufficient number of the militiamen of Massachusetts and New Hampshire could be called in to supply their place.

The mutinous men met, however, with a prompt rebuke from the patriotic people of their own colony. Indeed, so severely were the deserters condemned in Connecticut that some of them decided to return to Cambridge. Putnam’s tactful talks with the men did much towards quelling the mutiny, and in this work of restoring peace he found an efficient helper in an old comrade of the French and Indian War, Colonel Henry Babcock of Rhode Island.

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\* This biographer of Putnam errs in placing the incident at Cobble Hill. The British fired no cannon at the fortification there, from the time it was begun until it was finished. The narrow escape of the men, which he mentions, seems to have occurred at Lechmere’s Point.

When the reorganised Continental army began its new term on January 1, 1776, great confusion necessarily existed on account of the changes which had taken place in the ranks. This critical period was at length successfully passed, but the January thaws and the scanty supply of arms and ammunition prevented Washington from making a general assault on the British force. Putnam was even more anxious than the Commander-in-chief to expel the enemy from Boston ; and in preparation for bombarding the town his clever resourcefulness was employed in increasing the stock of cannon-balls. His "ingenious invention" for accomplishing this object is described in the old newspaper, the *Constitutional Gazette* :

"He [General Putnam] ordered parties, consisting of about two or three of his men, to show themselves at the top of a certain sandy hill, in sight of the King's schooner, *Somerset*, in Boston harbour, but at a great distance, in hopes that the captain would be fool enough to fire at them. It had the desired effect, and so heavy a fire ensued from this ship and others, that the country around Boston thought the town was attacked. By this he obtained several hundred balls which were easily taken out of the sand."

The scarcity of powder caused Putnam greater solicitude than ever. Said Colonel Moylan to Colonel Reed in a letter from Cambridge in January :

"The bay is open ; everything thaws here except Old Put. He is still as hard as ever, crying out for powder—powder,—ye gods, give us powder !"

Although no general assault against the British could be undertaken, several enterprises were planned in order to annoy the enemy. On the evening of January 8th, Putnam sent Major Knowlton, with about two

hundred men, to set fire in Charlestown to some houses which had not been destroyed by the conflagration on the day of the battle of Bunker Hill, and to bring off the guard stationed in them. General Putnam and his staff, who were spectators of the affair from Cobble Hill, were much amused by the alarm of the British garrison on Bunker Hill on discovering the flames of the burning buildings.

“The flashing of the musketry,” says a member of Putnam’s staff, “from every quarter of that fort, showed the confusion of its defenders,—firing, some in the air, some in the Mystic river; in short, they fired at random, and thought they were attacked at every quarter, which, you may suppose, gave no small pleasure to the General [Putnam] and a number of us who were spectators of the scene from Cobble Hill. Ten of the houses were soon in ashes. The sergeant and four of the men, with one woman, were brought off prisoners.” \*

Towards the last of January, the alarming news of reverses in Canada reached Cambridge. General Richard Montgomery, after capturing Montreal, had joined Colonel Benedict Arnold, who, with a detachment of the army around Boston, had made a terrible march through the wilderness of Maine to the St. Lawrence River. The united forces attacked Quebec, but suffered a disastrous repulse. Montgomery was killed, and, on account of the strength of the British, there were grave apprehensions that Canada must be relinquished. In this critical state of affairs, the Continental Congress urged Washington to send a general to take the chief command of the American troops in Canada; for General Philip Schuyler at Albany, who was in charge of the Northern campaign, thought of

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\* Letter dated January 9, 1776, printed in the *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, vol. xiv., p. 276.



resigning. Washington's reply to Congress, dated January 30, 1775, contains a reference to Putnam which shows us his estimate of that officer :

"I wish it was in my power," writes Washington, "to furnish Congress with such a general as they desire to send to Canada. Since the unhappy reverse of our affairs in that quarter, General Schuyler has informed me, that, though he had thoughts of declining the service before, he would now act. . . . General Putnam is a most valuable man and a fine executive officer ; but I do not know how he would conduct in a separate department. He is a younger major-general than Mr. Schuyler, who, as I have observed, having determined to continue in the service, will, I expect, repair into Canada."

At Cambridge, where Putnam was, after all, retained, affairs took a favourable turn in February. The weeks of enforced inactivity of the army beleaguering Boston seemed about to end, for not only had additional regiments of militiamen arrived in camp, but large supplies of ammunition, which the different colonies sent, had been received. Offensive measures were, moreover, made possible by the remarkable energy of Colonel Henry Knox, who,

"with an enterprise and perseverance that elicited the warmest commendations, had brought from Crown Point and Ticonderoga, over frozen lakes and almost impassable snows, more than fifty cannon, mortars, and howitzers."

It was now determined to take possession of Dorchester Heights in order to bring on a general action or to force the enemy from Boston. Preparatory steps were accordingly taken to fortify this position, which would command "a great part of the town and almost the



whole harbour." Captain John Chester, in a letter dated February 13th, writes : \*

"Yesterday the Generals went on to Dorchester Hill & Point to view & plan out the works to be done there, Knox and Gridley were with them. . . . Gen. Putnam says Gridley laid out works enough for our whole army for two years if the frost was to continue in that time & in short thinks we cannot do much to purpose there while the frost is in y<sup>e</sup> ground."

Chester tells of the needless alarm of members of the party at Dorchester, and how Putnam coolly gave kindly assistance to the lame engineer while the others were fleeing for their lives :

"Something droll Happen'd as they were on the Point & within call of the Enemy. They observed two officers on full speed on Horses from the Old to the New lines & concluded they were about to order the Artillery levelled at them. Just that instant they observed a fellow Deserting from us to them. This set 'em all a-running & Scampering for life except the lame Col. Gridley & Putnam, who never runs & tarried to wait on Gridley. They had left their Horses half a mile back & fear'd the enemy might attempt to encompass them."

In the same letter, Chester mentions Putnam's recent narrow escape at Cambridge from a musket-ball :

"Sunday night [February 11] as Putnam was passing by [Harvard] Colledge and on the west side the street, a Centry hailed from the far part of the Colledge Yard. He could not think he called to him as he had y<sup>t</sup> moment pass'd one & given y<sup>e</sup> Cor<sup>r</sup> [correct] Sign & was just that minute hailed by another. However the Centry in y<sup>e</sup> Yard not finding an answer up & fired as direct as he could at the Gen<sup>l</sup> which providentially escaped him tho' he heard the ball whistle."

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\* Original letter printed in the *Magazine of American History*, vol. viii., p. 127.

The difficulties which, on account of frozen ground, beset the execution of plans for fortifying Dorchester Heights were finally overcome by the ingenuity of Rufus Putnam, Israel's kinsman, who was lieutenant-colonel in Brewer's Massachusetts regiment, and who had been actively and efficiently employed in laying out defences around Boston. This officer, of marked ability for engineering, who had attracted Washington's special attention, proposed that "chandeliers" be erected on Dorchester Heights. These were defences made of stout timbers, ten feet long, into which were framed posts five feet high and five feet apart, placed on the ground in parallel lines and the open spaces filled in with bundles of fascines, strongly picketed together, thus forming a movable parapet of wood instead of earth. The plan for the "chandeliers" was at once adopted.

On Saturday night, March 2, 1776, Boston was bombarded from Cobble Hill, Lechmere's Point, and Lamb's Dam, Roxbury. The cannonade was continued on three successive nights; and, while the attention of the British was occupied by it, the Americans made extensive preparations to take possession of Dorchester Heights. On Monday night, March 4th, General Thomas, with two thousand men, marched thither to begin the fortifications. By four o'clock on Tuesday morning two forts were sufficiently advanced in construction to offer good protection against small arms and grape-shot. So extensive and formidable did the "rebel defences" appear, that General Howe believed that he must either evacuate Boston or drive the Americans from their new position. Having decided, for the sake of British honour, to attempt the latter alternative, he ordered twenty-four hundred

men, under Earl Percy, to embark in transports, rendezvous at Castle William, and attack the newly raised fortifications.

The movements of the enemy were watched with intense interest by the Americans. While the defenders of the Dorchester Heights awaited the coming of the British, four thousand men belonging to the best-disciplined part of the American army were under parade at Cambridge, in the vicinity of Fort No. 2. It was intended that this fine detachment, which General Putnam commanded, should make the long-proposed attack on Boston.

This plan to capture Boston while the main body of British troops was attacking Dorchester Heights had been decided upon at a Council of War which was held at Washington's headquarters about the first day of March. Cutter says that when the project was under discussion on that occasion,

"General Putnam, who was always restless, and more disposed to action than to deliberation, was continually going to the door and the windows to see what was passing without. At length General Washington said to him with some earnestness, 'Sit down, General Putnam, we must have your advice and counsel in this matter, where the responsibility of its execution is devolved upon you.' 'Oh, my dear General,' he replied, 'you may plan the battle to suit yourself, and I will fight it.'"

But the four thousand picked men who, on March 5th, were "headed," as Washington wrote Colonel Reed, "by Old Put," and who stood ready to make a descent upon the north side of Boston as soon as the Dorchester Heights should be assailed by the enemy, did not have the opportunity of advancing into the town. Such a high wind and furious surf arose in the after-

noon that the British General Howe found it impossible to assault the works on the Heights, and, after several days of further delay on account of boisterous weather and heavy rains, he was obliged to abandon his plan. Meanwhile the Americans strengthened their defences and pushed their batteries nearer Boston on the Dorchester side. The possession of Nook's Hill, in accordance with the decision of a Council of War which was held, March 13th, at General Ward's quarters in Roxbury, and at which Putnam was present, placed the British entirely at the mercy of the besiegers. The roar of cannon and mortars taught Howe the necessity of increased expedition in his preparations for leaving Boston, and, on the morning of March 17th, it was discovered that he had begun to embark his troops. The following account of the evacuation, published in the *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, March 30, 1776, is one of the best original sources of information in regard to the events of this memorable Sunday :

“ March 17. This morning the British army in Boston, under General Howe, consisting of upwards of seven thousand men, after suffering an ignominious blockade for many months past, disgracefully quitted all their strongholds in Boston and Charlestown, fled from before the army of the United Colonies, and took refuge on board their ships. The most material particulars of this signal event are as follows: About nine o'clock a body of the regulars were seen to march from Bunker's Hill, and at the same time a very great number of boats, filled with troops, put off from Boston and made for the shipping, which lay chiefly below the Castle [William]. On the discovery of these movements, the continental army paraded ; several regiments embarked in boats and proceeded down the river from Cambridge. About the same time two men were sent to Bunker's Hill in order to make discoveries. They proceeded accordingly and, when arrived, making a signal that the fort



was evacuated, a detachment was immediately sent down from the army to take possession of it. The troops on the river, which were commanded by General Putnam, landed at Sewall's Point, where they received intelligence that all the British troops had left Boston, on which a detachment was sent to take possession of the town, while the main body returned up the river. About the same time General Ward, attended by about five hundred troops from Roxbury, under the command of Colonel Ebenezer Learned, who embarked and opened the gates, entered the town on that quarter, Ensign Richards carrying the standard.

"The command of the whole being then given to General Putnam, he proceeded to take possession of all the important posts, and thereby became possessed, in the name of the Thirteen United Colonies of North America, of all the fortresses in that large and once populous and flourishing metropolis, which the flower of the British army, headed by an experienced general and supported by a formidable fleet of men-of-war, had, but an hour before, evacuated in the most precipitate and cowardly manner. God grant that the late worthy inhabitants now scattered abroad may speedily re-occupy their respective dwellings, and never more be disturbed by the cruel hand of tyranny; and may the air of that capital be never again contaminated by the foul breath of Toryism."

It was a most hearty welcome that Putnam and his men received in Boston from the patriotic citizens !



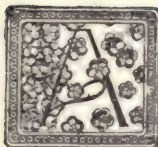




## CHAPTER XIX

### FORTIFYING NEW YORK

1776



**A**FTER the evacuation of Boston the British sailed a short distance to Nantasket Road and there in the outer harbour they lingered for ten days. Washington was greatly embarrassed by this stay of the fleet and suspected that the enemy might have "some design of aiming a blow at us before they depart." He therefore ordered, "in the strongest terms imaginable," certain precautionary measures, one of which was this:

"The General officers in their several departments are to take care that proper Alarm posts are assigned every corps, that no confusion or disorder may ensue, in case we should be called out: In a particular manner Generals Putnam and Sullivan are to attend to those of the Center and Left division." \*

But General Howe, instead of attempting to recover his lost position, only demolished the fortifications on Castle William, and on March 27, 1776, put out to sea with the greater part of his force. The commercial and strategical importance of New York made Washington positive that the enemy were bound for that

\* Orderly Book, 24 March, 1776.

place and he determined to forestall them by forwarding detachments thitherward without delay. He sent Putnam to assume the chief command in the city and to push forward the fortifications already planned and partly executed by General Charles Lee, who had been ordered to go there from Cambridge in January, 1776, to begin a defensive system. The change from Boston to New York was in many ways a marked one for Putnam. He now came in contact with customs and traditions, aristocratic tendencies and conservative forms of government that were in decided contrast to the democratic inclinations of the New England people. The Tories constituted a large proportion of the New York population of twenty-six thousand, and the bitterness of feeling which existed between them and the Revolutionary party made the position of executive commander in the city exceedingly difficult. A strong hand was needed, in the interests of the patriotic cause, to put in operation vigorous precautionary measures against disturbance and surprise, to guard the City Records and other property, and to maintain a strict watch upon the movements of spies and disaffected inhabitants.\* Putnam was equal to the duties of his important trust, as appears from the martial law which he at once enforced.

“General Putnam arrived at New York from the camp at Cambridge last Wednesday evening [April 4],” writes Samuel Hawke to Job Winslow. “On Friday he issued an order enjoining the soldiers to retire to their barracks and quarters at tattoo-beat, and to remain there until the reveille is beaten.

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\* The General Orders of Putnam, issued at this time, are printed in Force's *American Archives*, Fourth Series, vol. v. See also *Archives of the State of New York, The Revolution*, vol. i.

He also desired the inhabitants to observe the same rule, and to-day [April 8] he says that it has become absolutely necessary that all communication between the fleet \* and the shore should immediately be stopped, and, for that purpose, has given positive orders that the ships shall no longer be furnished with provisions. Any inhabitants or others who shall be taken that have been on board, near any of the ships, or going on board after the publication of the order, will be considered as enemies and treated accordingly."

On the third day after his arrival at New York, Putnam addressed a letter to President John Hancock of the Continental Congress, in which he mentioned his plans for the protection of the city and gave an account of the capture of a boat's crew on Staten Island. On the very next night after writing the letter, Putnam proceeded to fortify Governor's Island and also Red Hook, at the southern end of the Brooklyn peninsula. By bringing these two places into line with the series of forts which General Lee, before taking charge of the Southern Department in March, had planned, and which Lord Stirling, Putnam's immediate predecessor in command of New York, had partly constructed on both banks of the East River from the "Battery" to Hell Gate, it was expected that the passage of that river would be made more secure. The guns on the Brooklyn Heights and in the new works at Governor's Island and at Red Hook, together with those of the redoubts which guarded the southern end of Manhattan Island, could menace the British vessels then in New York harbour, and the fleet from Boston as soon as it

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\* The fleet here referred to was not the one which sailed from Boston after the evacuation of that city, but a fleet composed of the *Duchess of Gordon*, *Asia*, and other British ships, which had been in New York harbour several weeks.

arrived. Putnam even hoped to close the North or Hudson River to the enemy by batteries at various points and by obstructions in the channel. With all speed he sent Major Sherburne to the Continental Congress at Philadelphia for an appropriation of "at least three hundred thousand dollars," the army being "in the highest need of an immediate supply of cash."\* The vigilant General urgently entreated the New York Committee of Safety for additional regiments to build and defend the proposed works, and then, without waiting for the arrival of the new levies, he began to carry out his aggressive policy by employing such troops as were available. Colonel Gold Selleck Silliman of the 4th Regiment of Connecticut Militia describes Putnam's seizure of Governor's Island :

"Tuesday Morning, 9th April [1776]—Last Evening Draughts were made from a Number of Regiments here, mine among the Rest, to the Amount of 1,000 Men. With these and a proper Number of Officers Genl Putnam at Candle lighting embarked on Board of a Number of Vessels with a large Number of intrenching Tools and went directly on the Island a little below the City called Nutten [Governor's Island], where they have been intrenching all Night and are now at work, and have got a good Breast Work there raised which will cover them from the fire of the Ships ; and it is directly in the Way of the Ship coming up to the Town. The *Asia* has fallen down out of Gun Shot from this Place, and it deprives the Ships of the only Watering Place they have here without going down toward the Hook." †

Putnam had been in chief command at New York

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\* Force, *American Archives*, Fourth Series, vol. v., pp. 787, 843. The Continental Congress granted the amount which Putnam sent for.

† *Memoirs of the Long Island Historical Society*, vol. iii., p. 66.



nearly ten days when Washington arrived on April 13th. The latter, after personally inspecting the various positions which had been taken for the defence of the city, urged on the works. The American force present for duty numbered about ten thousand men. Several regiments, in consequence of an order from Congress, were soon forwarded as a reinforcement to Canada; then the troops at New York were formed into four brigades under Generals Heath, Spencer, Stirling, and Greene. Putnam himself was continued in the general superintendence of the fortifications in process of construction. As a result of the occupation of Governor's Island and Red Hook, it was decided to enlarge the plan for the Brooklyn works, and Greene was accordingly ordered to cross with his brigade to Long Island and to throw up, across the neck of the peninsula, a new line of defences from Wallabout Bay (the present Navy Yard) to the Gowanus Marsh. The other brigades laboured at the batteries in and about New York City. All the streets of New York leading up from the water were fortified by barricades, some of which were built of mahogany logs taken from West India cargoes. For additional protection to the city, an "American Navy," made up of schooners, sloops, row-galleys, and whale-boats, was put under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Benjamin Tupper, who had distinguished himself by a naval exploit or two in Boston Harbour during the siege. One craft in this primitive little fleet was named *General Putnam*, and had as its captain Thomas Cregier.

It was now the middle of May, but the British vessels which left Boston after the evacuation in March had not yet appeared off New York harbour. In this critical period of preparation against the



expected coming of the enemy, Washington was summoned by Congress for consultation in regard to the campaign, and Putnam was again placed in chief command at New York. He kept the absent Washington fully informed in regard to affairs. His letters—in every instance the body of the letter is in Aide-de-camp Webb's handwriting—cover a period of two weeks, for Washington was gone that length of time. Before May ended, Putnam reported, among other details from New York, that the signals on Staten Island, Green Bluff, and Governor's Island, concerning which Washington had given careful instructions, were completed, and that Lord Stirling, Colonel Rufus Putnam, and "one officer from the train" had gone up the North River to put the fortifications in the Highlands into "a fit and proper posture of defence." "I am driving on the works with all possible dispatch," wrote Putnam, referring to what was being done in the city itself, "and shall pay particular attention to your Excellency's directions in regard to sending an express in case of a fleet appearing on the coast."

Dispatches from General Schuyler, announcing an American defeat at the Cedars in Canada, reached New York on June 1st; and on the same day five vessels appeared off Sandy Hook, three of which Putnam thought were men-of-war. A messenger was sent in hot haste to Philadelphia with the news. Washington hurried back to New York, for the "exigency of affairs" seemed to render his presence there extremely necessary. Before he arrived, the vessels which had been sighted off Sandy Hook proved not to be the British fleet, and consequently the excitement had, in a great degree, subsided. But the "state of peace and quiet" in which he found the city was only temporary,

for the old rivalries between Whigs and Tories had been growing stronger and stronger, and the bitterness of feeling, already shown towards the loyalists, was to have a serious outbreak. On Thursday, June 13th, Pastor Shewkirk, of the Moravian Church of New York, recorded in his diary :

"Here in town very unhappy and shocking scenes were exhibited. On Monday night some men called Tories were carried and hauled about through the streets, with candles forced to be held by them, or pushed in their faces, and their heads burned ; but on Wednesday, in the open day, the scene was by far worse ; several, and among them gentlemen, were carried on rails ; some stripped naked and dreadfully abused. Some of the generals and especially Pudnam [Putnam] and their forces, had enough to do to quell the riot, and make the mob disperse." \*

The strain of exacting duties, day after day, in putting down public disturbances, in pushing forward the work of fortifying, and in keeping a sharp outlook for the enemy, was relieved for Putnam by his attendance at an occasional banquet, where he was always a welcome guest because of his jolly good nature and ready response to a call for a song. A festive event is mentioned by Captain Caleb Gibbs of Washington's Guard, in a letter to his " Dear Penelope " :

"June 18 [1776]. This afternoon, the Provincial Congress of New York gave an elegant entertainment to General Washington and his suite, the general and staff officers, and the commanding officer of the different regiments in and near the city. Many patriotic toasts were offered and drank with the greatest pleasure and decency. After the toasts, little Phil, of the Guard, was brought in to sing H——'s new campaign song, and was joined by all the under officers, who seemed

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\* Document 37, in *Memoirs of the Long Island Historical Society*, vol. iii.

much animated by the accompanying of Clute's drumsticks and Aaron's fife. Our good General Putnam got sick and went to his quarters before dinner was over, and we missed him a marvel, as there is not a chap in the camp who can lead him in the *Maggie Lauder* song."

On June 22nd, Major Aaron Burr was appointed aide-de-camp to Putnam, to take the place of Webb, who had been promoted to a similar position under Washington. Young Burr, now in his twenty-first year, had accompanied Arnold through Maine to Canada, and since his return from that fearful expedition, in which he had displayed great courage, he had been living at Washington's headquarters in New York, where he was invited to stay until a "suitable appointment could be procured for him." During his six-weeks' association with the Commander-in-chief, Burr contracted such prejudices against Washington that he purposed to retire from military service, but he was dissuaded from doing so by President Hancock of Congress, who obtained for him the appointment under Putnam. In his new position Burr was perfectly content, and nearly a year afterwards he could speak of himself as being still "happy in the esteem and entire confidence of my good old General." How little Putnam knew that this valued aide, of fascinating manners and brilliant talent, was to play, in the later history of America, a most sensational part because of unscrupulous principles!

June wore slowly towards its end, and the Americans were as busy as ever in strengthening their defences and in watching for a hostile armament. The whole American camp was soon greatly startled by the discovery of an "infernal plot" which was "on the verge of execution." Says Surgeon William Eustis, a warm friend of Putnam :

“Every General Officer and every other who was active in serving his country in the field was to have been assassinated; our cannon were to be spiked up; and in short the most accursed scheme was laid to give us into the hands of the enemy and to ruin us.”

A dozen or more of the conspirators were immediately arrested and imprisoned; and Thomas Hickey of Washington's Guard, who had been bribed by Tory money and who had seduced others “for the most horrid and detestable purposes,” was sentenced to death and forthwith hanged. The “Hickey Plot” was disclosed most opportunely, for on June 29th, the second day after the execution of the ringleader, forty-five vessels hove in sight off Sandy Hook and were reported by the American signal stations. Additional expresses came to the city, telling of other ships that had appeared off the coast; and, within four days, more than a hundred men-of-war and transports had dropped anchor in the Narrows. The fleet continued to swell, for General Howe, instead of sailing directly from Boston to New York, had made a voyage to Halifax, and now, with his brother, Admiral Richard Howe, he arrived in command of a force so formidable that the Yankees in New York were expected to be frightened into accepting the terms of reconciliation which he had been authorised to offer them.

On July 4, 1776, the Continental Congress at Philadelphia adopted a measure that put reconciliation out of the question. Five days afterwards all the brigades in New York were drawn up on their respective parade-grounds to listen to the Declaration of Independence; and “loud huzzas”—Old Put's lungs did him good service in leading the patriotic shouts—interrupted at intervals the reading of the bold document.



The proximity of the threatening armament demanded offensive methods for the protection of the city, and the resourceful Putnam was planning to spread destruction among the British ships at the Narrows by means of fire-crafts, and also to complete the obstructions in the Hudson with a contrivance of his own. To General Horatio Gates, who had been assigned to the command of the Northern Department, Putnam wrote on July 26th, telling what he purposed to do :

“The enemy’s fleet now lies in the bay very safe, close under Staten Island. Their troops possess no land here but the Island. Is it not very strange, that those invincible troops, who were to destroy and lay waste all this country with their fleets and army, are so fond of islands and peninsulas, and dare not put their feet on the main? But, I hope, by the blessing of God and good friends we shall pay them a visit on their island. For that end, we are preparing fourteen fire-ships to go into their fleet, some of which are ready charged and fitted to sail, and I hope soon to have them all fixed. We are preparing *chevaux-de-frise*, at which we make great dispatch by the help of ships, which are to be sunk; a scheme of mine which you may be assured is very simple, a plan of which I send you. The two ships’ sterns lie towards each other, about seventy feet apart. Three large logs, which reach from ship to ship, are fastened to them. The two ships and logs stop the river two hundred and eighty feet. The ships are to be sunk, and, when hauled down on one side, the picks will be raised to a proper height, and they must inevitably stop the river if the enemy will let us sink them.”

But Putnam met with various delays in carrying out his plan for completing the obstructions in the Hudson. On August 18th, before the hulks could be sunk in the river, near Fort Washington, the *Rose* and the *Phœnix*, two of the enemy’s ships-of-war that had taken advantage of a brisk breeze and sailed up the Hudson as far



as Tappan Bay, moved down the river, and returned to the Narrows as readily as they came up.

In turning his attention from the river to the harbour, Putnam soon found that his fire-ships could do little damage to the British fleet in the entrance to New York Bay, and he became greatly interested next in the invention of an ingenious Connecticut man. This was a submarine torpedo which the General thought could be used with disastrous effect against the enemy. David Humphreys, who appears to have been with Putnam at this time, gives us an account of the machine, which, because of its resemblance to a large sea-turtle, was named "The American Turtle." Says Humphreys :

"General Putnam, to whom the direction of the whale-boats, fire-rafts, flat-bottomed boats, and armed vessels, was committed, afforded his patronage to a project for destroying the enemy's shipping by explosion. A machine, altogether different from anything hitherto devised by the art of man, had been invented by Mr. David Bushnell, for sub-marine navigation, which was found to answer the purpose perfectly, of rowing horizontally at any given depth under water, and of rising and sinking at pleasure. To this machine, called the American Turtle, was attached a magazine of powder, which was intended to be fastened under the bottom of a ship, with a driving screw, in such sort, that the same stroke which disengaged it from the machine, should put the internal clock-work in motion. This being done, the ordinary operation of a gun-lock at the distance of half an hour, an hour, or any determinate time, would cause the powder to explode, and leave the effects to the common laws of nature. The simplicity, yet combination discovered in the mechanism of this wonderful machine, were acknowledged by those skilled in physics, and particularly hydraulics, to be not less ingenious than novel. The inventor, whose constitution was too feeble to permit him to perform the labour of rowing the Turtle, had taught his brother to manage it with perfect

dexterity ; but unfortunately his brother fell sick of a fever just before the arrival of the fleet. Recourse was therefore had to a sergeant in the Connecticut troops ; who, having received whatever instructions could be communicated to him in a short time, went, too late in the night, with all the apparatus, under the bottom of the *Eagle*, a sixty-four gun ship, on board of which the British Admiral, Lord Howe, commanded.

"In coming up, the screw that had been calculated to perforate the copper sheathing, unluckily struck against some iron plates, where the rudder is connected with the stern. This accident, added to the strength of the tide which prevailed, and the want of adequate skill in the sergeant, occasioned such delay that the dawn began to appear, whereupon he abandoned the magazine to chance, and after gaining a proper distance for the sake of expedition rowed on the surface toward the town. General Putnam, who had been on the wharf anxiously expecting the result from the first glimmering of light, beheld the machine near Governor's Island and sent a whaleboat to bring it on shore. In about twenty minutes afterwards the magazine exploded and blew a vast column of water to an amazing height in the air."

The consternation which the explosion caused both on shore and on board the British vessel, afforded Putnam and other officers great amusement.

"General Putnam and others who waited with great anxiety for the result," writes Dr. James Thatcher, another contemporary, in referring to the same experiment with the "American Turtle," "were exceedingly amused with the astonishment and alarm which this secret explosion occasioned on board of the ship. This failure, it is confidently asserted, is not to be attributed to any defect in the principles of this wonderful machine ; as it is allowed to be admirably calculated to execute destruction among the shipping." \*

But no further attempts to destroy the enemy's vessels with this "wonderful machine" appear to have been made.

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\* *Military Journal*, p. 64.

By midsummer the British transports and men-of-war in the vicinity of New York, nearly three hundred in all, were increased by a fleet, bringing the united forces of General Henry Clinton and Earl Cornwallis, who had failed to capture the city of Charleston, South Carolina, and by ships having on board a large body of British Guards, besides eight thousand Hessians. These reinforcements, like the troops preceding them, disembarked on Staten Island, and there went into camp. The army of General Howe now numbered more than thirty-one thousand men, rank and file.

Among the British officers on Staten Island was Major James Moncrieffe, the comrade of the earlier war, with whom Putnam had renewed friendship at the time of the exchange of prisoners at Charlestown in June, 1775, and to whom he sent gifts of provisions during the siege of Boston. Although he was related by marriage to Governor William Livingston of New Jersey, Lord Stirling, and other Americans of high station who had espoused the patriotic cause, Moncrieffe still adhered to the Crown. His daughter Margaret, a "witty, vivacious, piquant and beautiful" girl, nearly fourteen years of age, was at this time at Elizabethtown, N. J. She was very anxious to visit her father on Staten Island, but found herself sadly prevented by the military lines. Her father wrote to Putnam, soliciting a pass for her. In addressing the letter, however, he omitted the title of "General," for he, like every other British officer, considered all Americans in arms rebels without valid commissions. Margaret, in fear that her father's request would be denied because of his refusal to recognise the official rank of Putnam, wrote to the latter, begging him to overlook the omission of the proper title. Putnam received her note in New York, and his reply was

prepared for his signature by the hand of his new aide-de-camp, Burr. Here is the letter from the magnanimous General to the young girl :

“NEW-YORK, July 26, 1776.

“I should have answered your letter sooner, but had it not in my power to write you anything satisfactory.

“The omission of my title in Major Moncrieffe’s letter is a matter I regard not in the least ; nor does it in any way influence my conduct in this affair as you seem to imagine. Any political difference alters him not to me in a private capacity. As an officer he is my enemy, and obliged to act as such, be his private sentiments what they will. As a man I owe him no enmity ; but, far from it, will with pleasure do any kind office in my power for him or any of his connections.

“I have, agreeably to your desire, waited on his Excellency to endeavour to obtain permission for you to go to Staten-Island. He informs me that Lieutenant-Colonel Patterson, who came with the last flag, said he was empowered to offer the exchange of James Lovell for Governor [Philip] Skene [of Skenesboro’, now Whitehall, N. Y.]. As the Congress have reserved to themselves the right of exchanging prisoners, the General has sent to know their pleasure and doubts not they will give their consent. I am desired to inform you that if this exchange is made, you will have liberty to pass out with Governor Skene ; but that no flag will be sent solely for that purpose.

“Major William Livingston was lately here and informed me that you had an inclination to live in this city ; and that all the ladies of your acquaintance having left town, and Mrs. Putnam and two daughters being here, proposed your staying with them. If agreeable to you, be assured, Miss, you shall be sincerely welcome. You will here, I think, be in a more probable way of accomplishing the end you wish, that of seeing your father ; and may depend upon every civility from, Miss, your obedient servant,

“ISRAEL PUTNAM.” \*

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\* Force, *American Archives*, Fifth Series, vol. i., p. 471.



Putnam's wife and two daughters, who are mentioned in the foregoing letter, appear to have arrived several weeks before at the General's New York headquarters, at the Kennedy house, No. 1 Broadway. Margaret Moncrieffe accepted the cordial invitation to come here and live in the family until arrangements could be made for sending her to Staten Island. An officer was sent to conduct her to the city ; and we have, in her own words,\* the story of her experiences in her new surroundings :

"When I arrived in Broadway (a street so called), where General Putnam resided, I was received with great tenderness by Mrs. Putnam and her daughters, and on the following day I was introduced by them to General and Mrs. Washington, who likewise made it their study to show me every mark of regard ; but I seldom was allowed to be alone, although sometimes, indeed, I found an opportunity to escape to the gallery on the top of the house, where my chief delight was to view with a telescope our fleet and army on Staten Island. My amusements were few ; the good Mrs. Putnam employed me and her daughters constantly to spin flax for shirts for the American soldiers, indolence in America being totally discouraged ; and I likewise worked for General Putnam, who, though not an accomplished *muscadin*, like our *dilettanti* of St. James's Street, was certainly one of the best characters in the world ; his heart being composed of those noble materials which equally command respect and admiration."

After dinner one day, when Washington was present, the loyalist girl declined to join in a toast to the

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\* The *Personal Memoirs of Mrs. Margaret (Moncrieffe) Coghlan* were written in 1793. Her life has been made the subject of a historical novel, entitled *Margaret Moncrieffe : The first love affair of Aaron Burr*, by Charles Burdett. For her career, see Parton's *Life of Aaron Burr* and Sabine's *Loyalists of the American Revolution*.



Continental Congress and proposed, instead, one to General Howe. The whole company, she relates, was somewhat disconcerted by this "affront," but, she adds, "my good friend, General Putnam, as usual, apologised, and assured them I did not mean to offend." The fascinating little Tory was forthwith forgiven on condition that she should drink to the health of General Washington or General Putnam the first time she dined at General Howe's table.

On Wednesday, August 7th, Margaret was permitted to go in a barge from New York to see her father. She tells, with romantic femininity, what happened at the British headquarters on Staten Island :

"When my name was announced, the British commander-in-chief sent Colonel Sheriff with an invitation from Sir William Howe to dinner, which was necessarily accepted. When introduced I cannot describe the emotion I felt; so sudden the transition in a few hours that I was ready to sink into the earth! Judge the distress of a girl not fourteen obliged to encounter the curious inquisitive eyes of at least forty or fifty people who were at dinner with the general. Fatigued with their fastidious compliments, I could only hear the buzz among them, saying, 'She is a sweet girl, she is divinely handsome'; although it was some relief to be placed at table next to the wife of Major Montresor, who had known me from my infancy. Owing to this circumstance I recovered a degree of confidence; but, being unfortunately asked, agreeable to military etiquette, for a toast, I gave 'General Putnam.' Colonel Sheriff said, in a low voice, 'You must not give him here'; when Sir William Howe complaisantly replied, 'O! by all means; if he be the lady's sweetheart I can have no objection to drink his health.' This involved me in a new dilemma; I wished myself a thousand miles distant, and, to divert the attention of the company, I gave to the general a letter that I had been commissioned to deliver from General Putnam, of which the following is a copy. (And here I consider myself bound to apologise for the bad spelling of my most excellent republican friend. The bad

orthography was amply compensated for by the magnanimity of the man who wrote it) :

“ ‘ *Ginrale* Putnam’s compliments to Major Moncrieffe, has made him a present of a fine daughter, if he don’t *lick* [like] her he must send her back again, and he will previde her with a good *twig* husband.’ ”

“The substitution of *twig* for *whig* husband served as a fund of entertainment for the whole company.”

In connection with Putnam’s humourous allusions to the willingness of his family to have Margaret again with them, it is interesting to find that she returned soon afterwards from Staten Island to New York.

Despite the oppressive August weather, Putnam continued to be an exceedingly busy man. He was constant in attendance at early prayers at the Grand Battery—so General Henry Knox tells us—and after the morning duties, which were performed under a “sun hot enough to roast an egg,” he would often have some of the principal officers at dinner with him at his headquarters, where he offered always a most cordial hospitality. The brigades forming Putnam’s, Spencer’s, and Sullivan’s division, with the Connecticut militia, were retained in August within the city and its immediate vicinity. Of Heath’s division, Mifflin’s brigade was posted at Fort Washington, at the upper end of Manhattan Island, and George Clinton’s at Kingsbridge. Greene’s division—Nixon’s and Heard’s brigades, with the exception of Prescott’s regiment and Nixon’s, now under his brother, Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Nixon, which were on Governor’s Island—occupied the Long Island front.

The suspense of the Americans daily increased. The hostile troops on Staten Island seemed to be ready to

move forward at any moment against New York ; yet it was uncertain where they would make their first attack. Meanwhile General Gates of the Northern Department had abandoned Crown Point on the approach of a British force from Canada. He took post at Ticonderoga, and began to put that place in a proper condition for defence. From there Gates sent a characteristic letter to Putnam, bantering him about the old fort which he had helped to build in the French and Indian War, and inquiring in regard to affairs at New York :

“TYONDEROGA, August 11, 1776.

“DEAR PUT : Every fond mother dotes upon her booby, be his imperfections ever so glaring, and his good qualities ever so few. Crown-Point was not indeed your own immediate offspring, but you had a capital hand in rearing the baby. You cut all the logs, which are now rotten as dirt, and tumbled in the dust. No matter for that. Why should you not be fond of Crown-Point? If I live to be as old as you I shall be as fond of Tyonderoga. I can assure you I fancy already that my booby is a great deal handsomer than yours, and has a thousand excellencies more than yours ever possessed. But don't be uneasy, the absurdities of your booby time will very soon obliterate ; but mine will live for some future great engineer, like myself, to laugh at and despise.

“Joking apart: Have you blown up Staten Island? Have you burnt the enemy's fleet? Have you sent the two brothers [General Howe and Admiral Howe] to Hartford [American jail for British prisoners]? What have you and what have you not done? Sense, courage, honour, and abilities, you know to be the great outlines of a General. My friend Tom Mifflin [Brigadier-General Thomas Mifflin] has an uncommon share of all four. Present my affectionate compliments to him. I shall preserve your letter [probably Putnam's letter of July 26, 1776, about fire-ships and the *chevaux-de-frise*] for a winter evening's subject when we three meet again.

“Remember me affectionately, as you ought, and believe

me, veteran, your sincere well-wisher and most obedient,  
humble servant,

"HORATIO GATES."\*

Gates's letter, half jocular, half serious, reached Putnam at a crisis in the campaign when his courage and abilities were about to be put to the severest test.

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\* Force, *American Archives*, Fifth Series, vol. i., p. 900.





## CHAPTER XX

### THE BATTLE OF LONG ISLAND

1776



UTNAM had spent much of the time for several weeks in moving up and down New York harbour, to keep vigilant watch of the enemy. On the morning of August 17, 1776, he landed in great haste at one of the city wharves and reported that "at least one-fourth of the fleet had sailed."

"But where," wrote Adjutant-General Joseph Reed in a letter that day, "we are at a loss to judge or whether there may not be a mistake by their shifting their station. If they are really gone, one of two objects must be in view, either to go round Long Island and attempt to get above us in order to cut us off from the country or proceed around to the Delaware. I do not know any measure they could take which would so effectually disconcert and injure us as the latter." \*

Several days later the main body of troops on Staten Island seemed to be preparing to make an aggressive movement. Washington was now inclined to believe that the British intended to land above the city, in

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\* *Life and Correspondence of Joseph Reed*, by W. B. Reed, vol. i., p. 216.



order to hem in his army at the lower end of Manhattan Island. He therefore sent word on August 22nd to General Heath, a part of whose force was at Kingsbridge, to be ready to move down in case of an attack. Washington, in the same message, promised to send him some artillery,

“if,” he stated, “we have not other employment upon hand, which General Putnam, who is this instant come in, seems to think we assuredly shall have this day, as there is a considerable embarkation on board of the enemy’s boats.” \*

It was soon evident that the British purposed to cross with the main army from Staten Island to Long Island. Before noon, on August 22nd, fifteen thousand royal troops were transported across the Narrows to Gravesend Bay, and two days later this force was increased by five thousand Hessians. At the American headquarters there was a difference of opinion as to the design of the enemy who had left Staten Island. Some of the officers thought that a direct advance would be made by the whole force against the Brooklyn works; others feared that the landing on Long Island was only a feint to draw off our troops to that side and that the main attack would be on New York. In this time of doubt one thing was obvious to Washington, that it would be imprudent to run any risk on the Brooklyn side, and he accordingly sent six regiments to reinforce the garrison on the Heights. Soon after, Washington himself crossed over to Long Island. He found the British occupying a line from the coast through Gravesend to Flatlands, with an advanced division encamped in front of the American outpost at the Flatbush Pass.

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\* *Writings of George Washington*, ed. by W. C. Ford, vol. iv.

This hostile attitude convinced the Commander-in-chief that the Brooklyn garrison should be again reinforced. On his return to New York he dispatched four more regiments and, feeling that a change in the general command on Long Island was desirable, he appointed Putnam to supersede Major-General Sullivan, who had been filling the place of the fever-stricken Greene. As for the reasons for this new order of things, whereby Putnam was given the general command across the river while Sullivan was placed in subordinate control of Long Island, we have this statement by Adjutant-General Reed :

“On General Green’s being sick, Sullivan took the command, who was wholly unacquainted with the ground or country. Some movements being made which the General [Washington] did not approve entirely, and finding a great force going to Long Island, he sent over Putnam, who had been over occasionally ; this gave some disgust [to Sullivan], so that Putnam was directed to soothe and soften [him] as much as possible.” \*

The veteran Putnam, quick to detect at a distance the first sound of skirmishing on Long Island, had been all-impatient to be at the front. He crossed to the Brooklyn Heights on the morning of August 24th, immediately after receiving his appointment to the command. Said Reed in a letter from New York that day to his wife :

“While I am writing there is a heavy firing and clouds of smoke rising from the wood [on Long Island]. General Putnam was made happy by obtaining leave to go over—the brave old man was quite miserable at being kept here.”

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\* T. Sedgwick, *Life of William Livingston* ; letter of Reed to Governor Livingston.

Old Put was received with loud cheers on his arrival at the Brooklyn Heights, and his presence inspired universal confidence. He found that nearly one-third of the American army of nineteen thousand men was on that side, for the force there included not only Greene's division but the whole of Nixon's and Heard's Brigades (the two regiments on Governor's Island excepted), the greater part of Stirling's and Parsons's, and half of Scott's and Wadsworth's.

The General, accompanied by Aide-de-camp Burr, made an inspection of the chain of defences which had been built, during the summer, between the Wallabout Cove and the Gowanus Marsh. On the right of the road which led up from the Ferry were Fort Greene and Fort Box ; on the left were the Oblong Redoubt, Fort Putnam (probably named after Col. Rufus Putnam, who, as chief engineer, had marked out the principal lines on Long Island), and a redoubt on the left of Fort Putnam. These five works were connected by a line of intrenchments. Beyond the Brooklyn Heights rose a ridge of hills, extending from New York Bay midway through Long Island to its eastern end. The thick growth of woods and thickets, which covered the entire surface of this ridge, seemed to present such a continuous barrier to any approach by the enemy from the plains where they were camped, that the Americans hoped to be able to hold the ground against superior numbers. Several passes through the natural depressions of the wooded ridge needed to be guarded with care. The one nearest the coast was on the Gowanus Road, which led to the Narrows; another was on the Flatbush Road, which cut through the ridge at a distance of a mile and a half from the Brooklyn fortifications ; a third pass lay still farther to the east on the

road from Bedford to Flatbush ; and the fourth, known as the Jamaica Pass, was nearly four miles away, beyond the extreme left of the American position. It does not appear that Putnam, on the day of his arrival, changed any of the arrangements which Sullivan had already made for the defence of the Coast Road, the Flatbush Pass, and the Bedford Road, but left to him the disposition of the troops at these outposts.

On August 25th Washington sent written instructions to Putnam, expressing his disapproval of the random firing of the skirmishers at the outposts, and giving careful directions in regard to the precautions to be taken, especially in the wood next to Red Hook, bordering the Gowanus Creek, against the anticipated attack by the British. So heartily and efficiently had Putnam always seconded him in all his plans and preparations, that the Commander-in-chief had reason to feel that his orders would be followed out to the letter.

On the morning of August 26th Washington again crossed to Long Island. He spent a busy and anxious day, for he was now certain that the enemy intended "to make their grand push there." Towards evening, accompanied by Putnam, Sullivan, and other officers, he rode down to the outpost near Flatbush to observe the hostile force encamped in front of that pass, and it was here, according to the testimony of one of the American soldiers, that the Commander-in-chief and his companions were seen "looking at the enemy with their field-glasses." As a result of the reconnoissance, Washington, immediately on his return to New York that night of the 26th, sent over an additional reinforcement. This raised the American army on Long Island to a total of about seven thousand. Of this number, four thousand men were under Putnam's per-



sonal command behind the Brooklyn works, while Sullivan had the immediate charge of all the troops, nearly three thousand, outside the fortified lines. Three passes were in a measure provided for, but far over to the left was the Jamaica Road, to which little attention had been paid. To that extremely isolated place, Sullivan, exercising the same authority as in making other details, sent out on the evening of August 26th a special patrol of five commissioned officers. This was the only provision made for guarding the pass. In fact, the American generals, Washington included, apparently felt little apprehension of an attack from that direction. They thought the main body of the British would try to force the other passes.

It was evident to Putnam and the principal officers on Long Island that the enemy would soon make a strong advance movement, but the approach was even more " sudden and violent " than had been anticipated. The battle began at two o'clock on the morning of August 27th, when the American pickets in the vicinity of the Red Lion on the Gowanus Road were attacked by a force which had marched up from the Narrows. In the confusion and darkness the pickets fell back before their assailants, and some of their number were taken prisoners. Brigadier-General Samuel H. Parsons, who was in chief command of the Gowanus outpost, succeeded in rallying some of the men and posting them advantageously on a hill. Meanwhile news of the attack had been quickly carried to the Brooklyn camp. Putnam, whom Washington had instructed to hold the outposts " at all hazards " with the best troops, awoke Lord Stirling and sent him with a reinforcement to the relief of the pickets and to check the advance of the enemy. This officer, who had arrived in



camp two days before, describes the occurrences of the memorable morning of the battle. Says Stirling :

“About three o'clock in the morning of the 27th, I was called up and informed by General Putnam that the enemy were advancing by the road from Flatbush to the Red Lion. He ordered me to march with the two regiments nearest at hand to meet them ; these happened to be Haslet's and Smallwood's, with which I accordingly marched and was on the road to the Narrows just as the daylight began to appear. We proceeded to within about half a mile of the Red Lion and there met Colonel Atlee with his regiment, who informed me that the enemy were in sight ; indeed I then saw their front between us and the Red Lion. I desired Colonel Atlee to place his regiment on the left of the road and to wait their coming up, while I went to form the two regiments I had brought with me, along a ridge from the road up to a piece of wood on the top of the hill ; this was done instantly on very advantageous ground. Our opponents advanced and were fired upon in the road by Atlee's, who, after two or three rounds, retreated to the wood on my left and there formed. By this time Kichline's Riflemen arrived ; part of them I placed along a hedge under the front of the hill and the rest in the front of the wood. The troops opposed to me were two brigades of four regiments each, under the command of General Grant, who advanced their light troops to within one hundred and fifty yards of our right front, and took possession of an orchard there and some hedges which extended towards our left ; this brought on an exchange of fire between those troops and our Riflemen, which continued for about two hours and then ceased by those light troops retiring to their main body. In the meantime Captain Carpenter brought up two field-pieces, which were placed on the side of the hill so as to command the road and the only approach for some hundred yards. On the part of General Grant there were two field-pieces, one howitz advanced to within three hundred yards of the front of our right, and a like detachment of artillery to the front of our left, on a rising ground, at about six hundred yards distance. One of their brigades formed in two lines opposite to our right, and the others extended in one line to top of the

hills in the front of our left ; in this position we stood cannonading each other till near eleven o'clock." \*

While Lord Stirling and the British General Grant were thus opposing each other in regular battle formation, another struggle had begun elsewhere. The Americans at the Flatbush Pass had been attacked. Under the lead of General Sullivan, they were trying to block the advance of the Hessians, who had opened their cannon against the battery at that outpost. Back at the Brooklyn lines the troops were drawn up within the forts and behind the breastworks, where, since dawn, every preparation had been made to repel the British in case they penetrated the woods and approached through the passes and down the Gowanus and Flatbush Roads. So gallant a defense, however, were Parsons's, Stirling's, and Sullivan's men making at the outposts, that there seemed to be good prospect of thwarting the attempts of the enemy to move forward from the plains below. And now, when all was apparently going well with the Americans and they were congratulating themselves along the hills and in the woods and at the forts, one of Colonel Miles's soldiers on guard near the Bedford Road came hurrying into the Brooklyn camp and reported to Putnam that infantry and cavalry were marching down from the Jamaica Road. The startling news was all too true. A few moments later the real plans of the enemy were disclosed.

Little had Putnam and the other American generals suspected that the hostile demonstrations before the Gowanus and Flatbush passes were only feints to divert attention, while General Howe, with General Henry Clinton and Lords Percy and Cornwallis, conducted the

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\* *American Archives*, Fifth Series, vol. i., p. 1245.

main body of the British army far around by way of the Jamaica Pass. The long, flanking force had made an all-night march, had captured the special patrol of five mounted officers, and was now proceeding down from the Jamaica Road in order to place itself directly in the rear of the American outposts. Fortunately this retrograde movement was discovered in time to prevent the powerful column from cutting off entirely the retreat from the passes ; but the day soon became one of great confusion and disaster for the Americans. The guns of the British flanking force notified the Hessians, under De Heister, in front of Flatbush, and also the troops whom Grant had led up the Gowanus coast road, that the time had come for real action, and these detachments accordingly advanced in impetuous onset. The alarm spread along the American line and a wild struggle ensued, for the enemy's flanking column was pushing rapidly forward to close in upon the rear of the patriot troops. The imminent danger of being wedged in between the hostile forces compelled the men at the passes to turn and fight their way back to the Brooklyn works. Through the woods, down the slopes, and across the fields, they hurried. Battalions soon broke up, companies could not be kept together, and the soldiers, some singly, some in groups, cut their way, as best they could, towards the forts. Many were furiously attacked by the British light infantry ; others were charged upon by the dragoons ; and still others were pinned to the ground by Hessian bayonets. For several hours the woods rang with shouts of the combatants and the scene was one of hot and bloody excitement.

From the Brooklyn works, where Putnam was, a part of the fierce fighting could be seen. Most thrill-

ing was the sight of the heroic action of Smallwood's Maryland troops, under Stirling. Although nearly hemmed in by Cornwallis's detachment, which had advanced as far as the Cortelyou House, near the Gowanus Marsh, they faced the enemy and tried to secure the retreat of the other Americans across the Marsh into the camp. At the time that Stirling, who "fought like a wolf," was leading a gallant charge against the British, Washington crossed from New York to Brooklyn. He was deeply moved on witnessing the bloody hand-to-hand encounter and the forced retreat. "Good God!" he exclaimed with anguish, "what brave fellows I must this day lose!"

While the British were pressing forward towards the Brooklyn works, driving the Americans before them, Putnam was occupied in passing rapidly among the men behind the defences and in issuing orders right and left in anticipation of the assault which was momentarily expected. One of the New York militiamen at the intrenchments was a native of Brooklyn. His name was Remsen. This man in after years used to tell, among his reminiscences of the battle, a story of Putnam\* which, according to the statement of a listener, Carson Brevoort, was in substance as follows:

"At the point where Mr. Remsen was stationed, the embankment was so low that the men were obliged to crouch behind it to obtain protection from the British fire; and whenever the enemy approached within range the first line of troops kneeled to aim and discharge their guns. A few paces in the rear of the firing parties Gen. Putnam was constantly stalking back and forth, at every return enforcing anew his favourite command, which Bunker Hill had made so famous: 'Don't fire, boys, until you can see the whites of their eyes.' The

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\* *Memoirs of Long Island Historical Society*, vol. ii, p. 222.



eminent success of this injunction in that battle had given it an importance in the mind of the old Indian fighter which quite justified its frequent repetition behind the Brooklyn entrenchments. . . .

“Near that part of the line where Mr. Remsen lay was a group that attracted his attention, because he felt certain that its manœuvres would cause an explosion of Putnam’s wrath the moment it caught his eye. A soldier of one of the Connecticut regiments was crouching behind the breastwork and was busily employed in loading his own and his comrade’s gun, which were fired, however, only by the latter, a Maryland soldier, who was kneeling to rest his piece upon the parapet and with deliberate aim picking off the enemy’s troops. This partnership of courage and poltroonery, which exposed the brave Marylander without intermission while his comrade was reclining in perfect safety, at length arrested the attention of the promenading General. The angry blood, which fired so readily at the call of his hot temper, flamed in an instant on his countenance, and with a few quick strides he reached the side of the couchant hero, who remained unconscious of the proximity of his angry General. The flat side of his sword fell with stinging force on the back of the culprit as he exclaimed, ‘Get up, up you damned coward, and fire your own gun.’”

By two o’clock in the afternoon the battle was ended, for General Howe, having profited by his experience of the previous year at Bunker Hill, did not attempt to carry the works by storm. Although the Americans thus continued to hold the fortified camp, they had been disastrously repulsed. Four hundred patriots were lying either dead or wounded on the field, and at least a thousand, among whom were Generals Stirling and Sullivan, had been taken prisoners. The cause of the defeat is apparent at once. The flanking force on the Jamaica Road outnumbered the whole American army. The wonder, as historians like Marshall, Sparks, Carrington, and Fiske have pointed out,



is not that five thousand half-trained soldiers were defeated by twenty thousand veterans, but that they should have given General Howe a hard day's work in defeating them, thus leading the British general to pause and giving Washington time to plan the withdrawal of his army from its exposed situation. The responsibility for the surprise by the British flanking march on the Jamaica Road has been often discussed. A clear and true statement of the whole case has been made by Prof. Henry P. Johnston. He succinctly settles the controversy thus :

“As for the generalship of the day, if the responsibility falls on any one, it falls first on Sullivan, who sent out the mounted patrol in the first instance, and to whom it belonged to follow up the precautions in that direction. Putnam was in chief command, but nothing can be inferred from contemporary records to fasten neglect or blunder upon him any more than upon Washington, who, when he left the Brooklyn lines on the evening of the 26th, must have known precisely what disposition had been made for the night at the hills and passes. And upon Washington certainly the responsibility cannot rest. According to some of our more recent versions of this battle, the disaster is to be referred to the willful disobedience, criminal inattention, and total incapacity of General Putnam. Several writers make the charge so pointedly and upon such an array of fact, that the reader is left to wonder how all this should have escaped the notice of the Commander-in-chief at the time, and why Putnam was not immediately court-martialled and dismissed the service, instead of being continued, as he was, in important command. The charge is the more serious as it is advanced by so respectable an authority as Mr. Bancroft. Mr. Field, Mr. Dawson and Dr. Stiles, following the latter, incline strongly in the same direction. . . .

“In brief, the case seems to be this : On the night of the 26th, we had all the roads guarded. On the morning of the 27th, Putnam promptly reinforced the guards on the lower road when the enemy were announced. The arrangements were

such that if an attack was made at any of the other points, he and Sullivan were to have word of it in ample time. No word came in time from the left, for the reason that those who were to bring it were captured, or surprised, or failed of their duty. Hence the disaster. The dispositions on Long Island were quite as complete as those at Brandywine more than a year later, where we suffered nearly a similar surprise and as heavy a loss. Suppose the very small patrols sent out by Washington and Sullivan to gain information before that battle had been captured, as at Long Island—we should have sustained a greater disaster than at Long Island.

“Under this state of facts, to charge Putnam with the defeat of the 27th, in terms which some writers have employed, is both unjust and unhistorical. That misfortune is not to be clouded with the additional reflection, that it was due to the gross neglect and general incapacity of the officer in command. No facts or inferences justify the charge. No one hinted it at the time; nor did Washington in the least withdraw his confidence from Putnam during the remainder of the campaign.” \*

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\* “Campaign of 1776,” in *Memoirs of Long Island Historical Society*, vol. iii., pp. 192-195.





## CHAPTER XXI

### A FORCED RETREAT

1776



UNDAUNTED by the defeat in the battle of Long Island, the Americans under Putnam strengthened the Brooklyn works in order to make a vigorous resistance of any attempt by the British to carry the position by storm.

Reinforcements arrived from New York side and on August 28th, the day after the passes had been captured by the enemy, the number of patriots in the forts and behind the other defences at Brooklyn had been increased to more than nine thousand five hundred men. Despite hunger, fatigue, and inclement weather, they kept up stout heart and obeyed all orders with spirit. Meanwhile, the British Commander-in-chief, Howe, too cautious to attempt an immediate assault, was preparing to approach the Americans by regular siege. His army lay in a semi-circle a mile and a half distant along the edge of the woods. When detachments from this force moved forward to open trenches nearer the Brooklyn lines, the Americans fired upon them. A series of skirmishes now began, "in which," writes Colonel Gold S. Silliman, one of Putnam's officers, "the

success is sometimes one way and sometimes another.” “ We are in constant expectation of a general battle,” he notes on August 29th ; “ no one can be here long without getting pretty well-acquainted with the whistling of cannon and musket-shot.”

Washington soon realised that it was useless to attempt any longer to keep the enemy at bay. So he called a Council-of-War to consider the question of retreat. Major-Generals Putnam and Spencer, Brigadier-Generals Mifflin, McDougall, Parsons, Scott, Wadsworth, and Fellows met, with the Commander-in-chief, at the house of Philip Livingston, who a few weeks before had been one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and who was still in attendance at the Continental Congress at Philadelphia. The beautifully-furnished colonial mansion of this well-known patriot stood on the line of Hicks Street, just south of Joralemon Street, on Brooklyn Heights. Here, on the stormy afternoon of August 29th, the all-important matter of retreat was fully discussed, and those present were “ convinced by unanswerable reasons ” that the army should be removed to New York. A high wind and strong tide seemed to make an immediate withdrawal impossible, but fortunately the weather soon changed and on the night after the Council-of-War there was accomplished one of the most brilliant feats of the war,—the transportation of the whole American force on Long Island across the East River to New York, without discovery by the enemy. In that memorable midnight achievement, in slipping away from the British, Putnam was one of the most energetic leaders, and we may believe that the safe embarkation of the troops was in large measure due to the readiness with which the men, who had implicit



faith in his military sagacity, obeyed his instructions. He ably seconded the great chief, Washington.

Despite the proximity of the British, who quickly took possession of the Brooklyn works and Governor's Island, and thus commanded New York, the American generals agreed that the city should not be given "in fee-simple" to the enemy. They accordingly arranged to occupy it with their troops as long as possible. In anticipation, however, of the final evacuation, some of the stores and ammunition were removed, and the women and children were also sent northward. It must have been at this time that Putnam's wife and daughters went to Kingsbridge, from which place they soon afterwards returned to Connecticut.

A new disposition of the American troops was effected within a few days after the retreat from Long Island. The whole army was divided into three grand divisions under Putnam, Spencer, and Heath. Putnam's division, which consisted of Parsons's, Scott's, James Clinton's (Glover's), Fellows's, and Silliman's brigades, was assigned to the city and protected the East River above as far as Fifteenth Street. Spencer's division of six brigades continued the line of defence from that point to Horn's Hook and Harlem; and Heath's division of two brigades guarded Kingsbridge and the Westchester shore. Thus the attempt was made to defend every point on the East side from the Battery to Kingsbridge, or the entire length of Manhattan Island, a distance of nearly fifteen miles.

The obstruction of the North or Hudson River still seemed to Putnam a very important thing to be accomplished, for, as he said at this time, "If Howe gets to Albany, our north-western army must quit Ticonderoga or fall a sacrifice. Burgoyne need never come from



Canada." But, on account of their limited military force, the Americans on Manhattan Island were compelled to confine their attention to the East shore, and when a Council-of-War decided on September 12th to abandon New York City, the detachments at the several points above were ordered to guard the landings until Putnam, who was to superintend the removal of all the troops and stores from the city, had finished his task.

About eleven o'clock on Sunday morning, September 15th, Putnam, while busily occupied in making the final preparations for the evacuation of the city, heard a distant roar of guns. In all possible haste he mounted his horse and started for the place of action. The sound of the cannonading seemed to come from the vicinity of Kip's Bay. While speeding thitherward, he met Washington on Murray Hill. The Commander-in-chief had also heard the booming and in great alarm had ridden from his new headquarters at the Morris (Jumel) mansion on Harlem Heights. Washington and Putnam, each of whom had been accompanied by officers, led the way at full gallop to the front. There they found to their great surprise and mortification that the men of the different brigades, stationed along the East River shore, were fleeing before the advance of the British, who, under cover of fire from their frigates, had landed at the foot of Thirty-fourth Street. The American generals made every exertion to rally the runaways. "Take to the wall! Take to the cornfield!" shouted Washington, as he quickly rode in among the retreating men and tried to face them about. But his efforts to stop the fugitives were futile and, in indignation at their cowardice, he lashed some of them over the shoulders with his cane, and demanded

whether these were the soldiers with whom he was to defend America. The unflinching general was at last so exposed to the oncoming enemy that, according to a contemporary account, "his attendants to extricate him out of his hazardous situation caught the bridle of his horse and gave him a different direction."

The fearless Putnam had made an equally bold and spirited attempt to rally the panic-stricken men. On finding that a stand against the British was impossible at Kip's Bay, and that the soldiers of the lower posts were also retreating in mad confusion, he decided, with characteristic promptitude, upon a daring manœuvre. He purposed to dash back from Murray Hill into the city and extricate Silliman's brigade, Knox's artillerymen, and the other troops there that were in imminent peril of being cut off by the enemy. Hezekiah Munsell of Wadsworth's brigade, one of the fugitives from the foot of East Twenty-third Street, who joined retreating comrades on the main road that led towards Harlem Heights, caught a glimpse of the speeding general.

"We soon reached the main road which our troops were travelling," says Munsell, "and the first conspicuous person I met was Gen. Putnam. He was making his way towards New York when all were going from it. Where he was going I could not conjecture though I afterwards learned he was going after his men." \*

Aide-de-camp Burr, whom Putnam had left in the city, had already realised that the troops would be caught in a trap, if the enemy succeeded in extending the lines across Manhattan Island, and he had therefore assumed the responsibility of starting them along.

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\* *History of Ancient Windsor, Conn.*, p. 715.

Putnam was glad enough to find that something had been done to save the men from their extreme danger, and he spurred his horse forward to overtake them. He came up to his sweltering troops while they were toiling under the hot sun along the west side of the Island. Encouraged by his inspiring presence, the belated soldiers redoubled their heroic efforts to push through the woods and lanes in order to escape the British. David Humphreys, Adjutant in the Second Connecticut Regiment of Militia on this trying march, writes of Putnam thus :

“ I had frequent opportunities that day of beholding him, for the purpose of issuing orders, and encouraging the troops, flying on his horse covered with foam, wherever his presence was most necessary. Without his extraordinary exertions the guards must have been inevitably lost, and it is probable the entire corps would have been cut in pieces. When we were not far from Bloomingdale, an Aid-de-camp [Burr] came from him at full speed, to inform that a column of British infantry was descending upon our right. Our rear was soon fired upon, and the Colonel of our regiment [Jabez Thompson], whose order was just communicated for the front to file off to the left, was killed on the spot. With no other loss we joined the army, after dark, on the Heights of Harlem.”

It was British over-confidence that gave Putnam and his men the opportunity to escape from New York. Howe thought that the early morning movements against the American detachment at Kip's Bay had immediately cleared the city of every rebel, and so he felt no haste in drawing his lines across the island. He and his principal officers stopped for rest and refreshment at the Murray country-seat, which stood at about the corner of Park Avenue and Thirty-sixth Street. Dr. James Thacher, the contemporary patriot, tells this interesting story in his *Military Journal* :

"Most fortunately, the British generals, seeing no prospect of engaging our troops, halted their own, and repaired to the house of Mr. Robert Murray [father of Lindley Murray, the grammarian], a Quaker and friend of our cause ; Mrs. Murray treated them with cake and wine, and they were induced to tarry two hours or more, Governor Tryon frequently joking her about her American friends. By this happy incident, General Putnam, by continuing his march, escaped a rencounter with a greatly superior force, which must have proved fatal to his whole party. Ten minutes, it is said, would have been sufficient for the enemy to have secured the road at the turn, and entirely cut off General Putnam's retreat. It has since become almost a common saying among our officers, that Mrs. Murray saved this part of the American army."

The line of Putnam's successful retreat seems to have been from Bayard's Hill Fort on Grand Street across the country to Monument Lane (Greenwich Avenue), which led to the obelisk erected in honour of General Wolfe and others, at a point on Fifteenth Street a little west of Eighth Avenue. The lane there joined with an irregular road running on the line of Eighth Avenue, known afterwards as the Abingdon or Fitz-Roy Road, as far as Forty-second or -third Street. From here Putnam's troops kept west of the Bloomingdale road, and finally, taking the road at some point above Seventieth Street, pushed on to Harlem Heights.\* On their arrival there they were received with great rejoicing, for "before our brigades came in," says Humphreys, "we were given up for lost by all our friends."

The condition of the patriotic troops, as they lay on their arms under the open sky on the night following the retreat to Harlem Heights, was disheartening

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\* *Memoirs of Long Island Historical Society*, vol. iii., p. 238.



indeed. Greatly exhausted after their long march, exposed to a heavy shower during the evening, and chilled by a cold autumn wind that blew with much violence, the soldiers suffered extreme physical discomfort in addition to their depression of spirits in having been driven precipitously from the works upon which they had spent much labour. It seemed probable that on the next morning the British would follow up their success. Notwithstanding all the gloom and apparent hopelessness that prevailed among the troops, the American generals could not but trust that in case of an attack there were many in camp who would "act like men," as the Commander-in-chief earnestly hoped, "and show themselves worthy of the blessings of freedom."

It was necessary to keep a sharp lookout on the enemy, and for this purpose Washington, early on the morning of September 16th, sent out a party of one hundred and twenty Rangers under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Knowlton. This small body of select troops, consisting of volunteers from the New England regiments, had been organised by Knowlton since the battle of Long Island, and was similar to the partisan corps which Putnam himself had led in the French and Indian War. The Rangers advanced under cover of the woods and scouted along the westerly side near the Hudson River until they encountered the enemy's pickets stationed near One Hundred and Fourth Street. A detachment of British Light Infantry, numbering upwards of three hundred, responded to the alarm from the outpost and began a sharp skirmish with the "audacious rebels." Knowlton and his men bravely held their ground against superior numbers, but at length were forced to retreat. They were closely pur-



sued by the enemy, who, in high glee over the success in driving back their adversaries, continued to follow as far as the hill where Grant's tomb now stands, or the elevation known as "Claremont." There the King's Light Troops halted and, in derision of the fleeing provincials, "sounded their bugle horns as is usual after a fox-chase." The insulting notes were heard in the American camp, across the "Hollow Way." Says Adjutant-General Reed, who, like many another patriot, was stirred by the contemptuous bugle blast from the Claremont height, "I never felt such a sensation before—it seemed to crown our disgrace." \*

The main army of Americans was already in readiness for action, for from the moment that the first sound of distant skirmishing fell on the ears of Washington that morning, he had made rapid preparations to resist any attack that the enemy might make upon his camp. Greene's division, as a strong advanced guard, occupied a position between One Hundred and Twenty-seventh Street and One Hundred and Thirty-third Street, and so overlooked the Hollow Way; Putnam's division was farther north, between One Hundred and Thirty-third Street and One Hundred and Forty-seventh Street; and Spencer's division was immediately in front of Washington's headquarters at the Morris House. Intrenchments were being hastily thrown up across Harlem Heights, along the line of One Hundred and Forty-seventh Street.

The appearance of British troops on the Claremont hill naturally led Washington to think that an attempt was about to be made to carry his position by storm.

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\* H. P. Johnston's *Battle of Harlem Heights* contains a valuable collection of original documents relating to the battle.

Knowlton's Rangers, however, arrived with the news that the hostile force was only about three hundred strong and was separated nearly a mile from the main body of the British army. The military instincts of Washington recognised at once the opportunity to make a movement which, if successful, would inspire his despondent troops. He planned to entrap the British Light Infantry by drawing them down into the Hollow Way and cutting off their retreat. According to this project, Colonel Knowlton and his Rangers, together with three companies of Virginia riflemen under the command of Major Leitch, were to try to get in the rear of the enemy, while other detachments made a feint in front of the hill and induced them to advance into the hollow. Thus the British would be caught between two fires and compelled to surrender. Washington communicated the plan to Putnam, who, familiar with such strategy by long experience in Indian warfare, assisted with much enthusiasm in ordering out the parties to effect the proposed manoeuvre. "General Putnam," relates Oliver Burnham, one of the Rangers, "came up to Colonel Knowlton and directed him to take the left flank." While the men under Knowlton and his fellow-officer Leitch moved circuitously around the British, the other party, composed of about one hundred and fifty volunteers from Nixon's brigade of Greene's division, under Lieutenant-Colonel Crary, advanced into the Hollow Way.

"This took effect," says Washington in describing the engagement which followed, and which is known as the Battle of Harlem Heights, "as I wished on the part of the enemy. On the appearance of our party in front, they immediately ran down the hill, took possession of some fences and bushes, and a smart firing began, but at too great a distance to do much execution

on either side. The parties under Colonel Knowlton and Major Leitch unluckily began their attack too soon, as it was rather in flank than in rear. In a little time Major Leitch was brought off wounded, having received three balls through his side ; and, in a short time after, Colonel Knowlton got a wound, which proved mortal. The men, however, persevered, and continued the engagement with the greatest resolution. Finding that they wanted a support, I advanced part of Colonel Griffith's and Colonel Richardson's Maryland regiments, with some detachments from the eastern regiments who were nearest the place of action. These troops charged the enemy with great intrepidity, and drove them from the wood into the plain, and were pushing them from thence, having silenced their fire in a great measure, when I judged it prudent to order a retreat, fearing the enemy, as I have since found was really the case, were sending a large body to support their party."

The "plain" which Washington mentions as the place where the British attempted to make a stand in falling back before the impetuous charge of the Americans, was a buckwheat field, near the present grounds of Columbia University and Barnard College. For nearly two hours the fighting raged here on Morning-side Heights. It was during this stage of the battle that Washington ordered out additional troops. Among them were the very militiamen who had been panic-stricken the day before at Kip's Bay, but they now redeemed themselves by gallant conduct. Eighteen hundred Americans in all took part in the battle. Putnam and some of the principal officers joined in the "smart action," so the contemporary records tell us, "and behaved nobly." "By the spirited conduct of General Putnam and Colonel Reed, the Adjutant-General," reports General Greene, who was also one of the heroes in the fight, "our people advanced upon the plain ground without cover, and attacked them and

drove them back." Reed himself wrote soon after the battle, in a letter to his wife :

"I suppose many Persons will think it was rash & imprudent for Officers of our Rank to go into such an action (Genl. Putnam, Gen. Green, many of the General's [Washington's] family—Mr. Tilghman [Washington's aide-de-camp] &c., were in it), but it was really done to animate the Troops who were quite dispirited & would not go into Danger unless their officers led the Way."

The hot engagement was just such an one as Putnam delighted in, and his personal exertions and bravery did much towards emboldening the men. The enemy "met," to quote General Greene again, "with a very different kind of reception from what they did the day before" at Kip's Bay. The British Light Infantry, although reinforced in the battle of Harlem Heights, could not hold their ground before their opponents and were compelled, as General George Clinton, another American officer who was present, says, "to fall back into an Orchard, from thence across a Hollow, and up another Hill not far distant from their own Lines," and now the Americans followed in close pursuit and "enjoyed to the full," in the apt words of a recent writer, "the novel sensation of a fox-chase, in which they did not personate the fox!"\* A large column of the British Reserve, however, was observed to be advancing to the aid of the fleeing troops and at this juncture, about three o'clock in the afternoon, came Washington's orders for his men to return. So exhilarating had been the experience of chasing the red-coats that "it was with difficulty," states Reed, "our

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\* W. R. Shepherd, in "The Battle of Harlem Heights" in *Half Moon Series*.



men could be brought to retreat." But at length, as we learn from the aide-de-camp whom Washington sent with the message to retreat, the patriot troops "gave a Hurra! and left the field in good order."

The British had lost about one hundred and seventy-five men, killed or wounded. The American casualties were a little less. The death of Knowlton was a heavy personal blow to Putnam. That trusty and gallant soldier, to whom the General was deeply attached, had been willing "to serve either by water or by land, by night or by day," and had never been known to say "Go on, boys!" but always "Come on, boys!" Leitch died of his wounds a few days after Knowlton. The battle, although it cost the American army these two valued officers, "was attended"—to use Washington's expression,—"with many salutary consequences." Reed bears testimony to the change it made in the American army. "I hope," he said, "its effects will be lasting." The effects were more definitely stated by General George Clinton, who speaks of the battle thus: "It has animated our Troops, gave them new spirits, and erased every bad Impression, the Retreat from Long Island, &c. had left on their minds, they find they are able, with inferior Numbers, to drive their Enemy, and think of nothing now but Conquest."

Realising the necessity of being prepared for a retaliatory attack by the British, Washington took special precautions for guarding the camp on the night after the battle. Putnam was directed to command on the right flank along the Hollow Way, and Spencer was to watch the ridge, as far up as headquarters. "Should the enemy attempt to force the pass to-night," was one of the orders, "General Putnam is to apply to General Spencer for a reinforcement."



No attack, however, was made by the British on this night of September 16th. In fact, nearly a month passed away before the enemy made any important movement. Meanwhile Washington urged on the work of building the defences which had been begun on the day of the battle of Harlem Heights. They consisted of three lines of intrenchments and redoubts; the first line running along One Hundred and Forty-seventh Street, the second at about One Hundred and Fifty-third Street, and the third, which was never completed, at One Hundred and Sixty-first Street. According to the orders issued on September 26th, the troops under Putnam were stationed in front of the first line, and those under Spencer in the rear of it.

On the plains between the American and British armies lay a quantity of wheat, corn, and hay. A portion of this was successfully carried off one day by a detachment under the command of Putnam, who was always ready to undertake such a venture in the vicinity of the enemy. Colonel John Chester mentions the expedition in a letter from the American camp, dated October 3rd.

“Not long since Genl. Putnam,” he writes, “with a party of 1600 or 1800 men as covering party, went on to Harlem plains & with a number of waggons brought off a large quantity of Grain, but not the whole, for just at Day break the Enemy had manned their lines & were seen in column advancing; as our party were not more than half theirs it was thought best to retreat which was done in good order & without a skirmish.”

The Americans had not abandoned the project for obstructing the Hudson River with sunken ships; and they improved the opportunity, while the enemy remained quiet, to complete the *chevaux-de-frise* which

Putnam had originally proposed. It stretched from Jeffrey's Hook at Fort Washington to the northernmost redoubt at Fort Lee. Unfortunately it proved of little service, because the rapid current, changing with every turn of the tide and continually wrenching the work, so weakened it that it gave way before the weight and momentum of several British war-ships, which sailed up the river on October 9th. Within a week after that date, scouts reported in the American camp that a large hostile force in flat-boats had passed up the East River through Hell Gate and was landing at Throg's Neck, near the town of Westchester, about nine miles distant from Harlem Heights. Washington hastily summoned a Council-of-War. It was an interesting gathering of eager officers. Putnam was there, and Lee, who had recently arrived from South Carolina, and Stirling and Sullivan, both of whom had just been exchanged after being prisoners of the British. All present at the council were agreed that the enemy must have given up any plans for a direct attack on the American position at Harlem Heights, and that they were doubtless trying to get in the rear by an advance across Westchester County to the Hudson River, where the men-of-war, which had forced a passage through the *chevaux-de-frise*, lay anchored. It was decided by the American officers that, in order to escape being hemmed in, their own troops must evacuate Manhattan Island, except Fort Washington, which Greene, who had general command of the post, considered impregnable and of great value for future operations.

To forestall the British manoeuvres, Washington and his generals broke camp at once and hurried, with the main army, northward towards White Plains. On the

march thither, earthworks were thrown up at every prominent point along the west bank of the River Bronx and a small chain of communicating posts was established throughout the entire distance. During that fortnight, the energetic services of Putnam were of great help to the Commander-in-chief in making the remarkable advance movement whereby the American army succeeded in occupying a position which commanded the roads to the Hudson River and to New England. Here, at White Plains, were constructed intrenchments, partly in double line, which ran along hilly ground. The left flank was protected by a mill-pond, and the right by a bend of the River Bronx. Four divisions of the army, numbering (with the troops from Kingsbridge and New Jersey) about thirteen thousand men, were posted behind these defences. In the rear was higher ground, which commanded the passes through the hills by the Peekskill and Upper Tarrytown Roads, and afforded an ultimate position in case of a retreat from the first. Beyond the River Bronx rose Chatterton Hill, which presented a steep front to a hostile force.

Meanwhile, the British in their progress from Throg's Neck had been delayed at different points. They had lost nearly ten days waiting for reinforcements. The hard march across the rough country east of the Bronx was made more difficult by frequent encounters with the American advance guards. At last, on October 28th, the British troops, thirteen thousand in number, arrived in front of White Plains. On that very morning, Washington, Putnam, Lee, Heath, and other officers had ridden out of camp to examine the heights in the rear of the American works. A messenger brought the news in hot haste to them that the enemy had appeared ; and the generals on the gallop back to

their lines beheld an exciting scene—the British army, equal in size to their own, forming in heavy columns to make an attack.

It seemed at first as if the enemy intended to make an assault in front, but their troops were soon seen to be filing off towards Chatterton Hill to dislodge the American detachment under Col. Rufus Putnam, the engineer, who had been sent to mark out a line of defence on the rocky brow. Washington immediately forwarded thither a reinforcement under General McDougall, who was accompanied by Captain Alexander Hamilton with two pieces of artillery. Engineer Putnam describes what took place when the British advanced :

“I had just arrived on Chatterton hill in order to throw up some works when they [the British] hove in sight. As soon as they discovered us, they commenced a severe cannonade, but without any effect of consequence. General McDougall arrived about this time, with his brigade, from Burtis’, and observing the British to be crossing the Bronx below in large bodies in order to attack us, our troops were posted in a very advantageous position to receive them. The British were twice repulsed in their advance. At length, however, their numbers were increased so that they were able to turn our right flank. We lost many men, but from information afterwards received, there was reason to believe that they lost more than we did. The wall and stone fence behind which our troops were posted proved as fatal to the British as the rail-fence and grass hung on it did at Charlestown, June 17, 1775.”\*

When the American flank was being turned on Chatterton Hill and the Hessians were boldly charging up the face of the steep ascent, Washington ordered General Putnam forward with a reinforcement, but these

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\* MSS. Memoirs of Rufus Putnam, in Library of Marietta College, Marietta, Ohio.



troops were "not able," as one of the soldiers relates,\* "to get up in time to give the necessary assistance" before the Americans were forced from the hill. Putnam and his men, however, rendered efficient help to the retreating soldiers by firing from behind trees and fences, and thus covering their return to the main army. The American loss amounted to about thirty prisoners and one hundred and thirty killed and wounded. The British casualties were nearly one hundred greater.

The "Battle of White Plains," so called, had been fought on Chatterton Hill, for Howe, still fearful of the consequences of a front attack on the American lines, waited for reinforcements, and after their arrival, he was prevented by a storm from bringing on an engagement which he planned for October 31st. That night Washington took advantage of the delay and withdrew all his force to North Castle Heights, where he could occupy an impregnable position. On November 5th, the British suddenly broke camp at White Plains and moved off towards the Hudson River, a manœuvre which could "not be accounted for with any degree of certainty" by Washington and his generals. It was thought that the enemy might still have in view their original plan and, by a sudden wheel, try to accomplish it. Detachments were sent out to observe their movements and to harass them as much as possible. It was soon evident that Howe, instead of making any further attempt to hem in the American army, would either attack Fort Washington or cross into New Jersey and advance against Philadelphia. To thwart the British purpose, Putnam, with several thousand men, was dis-

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\* Force, *American Archives*, Fifth Series, vol. ii, p. 1284.



patched from North Castle Heights into New Jersey. General Mifflin, writing from Peekskill on November 10th, says :

“General Lord Stirling passed King’s Ferry yesterday afternoon to New Jersey with twelve hundred men. Colonel Hand is now embarking for Jersey with one thousand ; General Bell, with seventeen hundred, is here and preparing to embark ; the whole under the command of General Putnam. General Washington is expected here this morning. The enemy’s main body was encamped yesterday between Dobb’s Ferry and Colonel Phillips’s Mills. If they attempt anything in New Jersey we shall be able to face them and I trust drub them.”

With the troops under his immediate command, Putnam, after crossing the Hudson, moved down the west bank of the river and encamped near Hackensack. Meanwhile Washington stationed Heath at Peekskill with three thousand men to guard the entrance to the Highlands and left Lee at North Castle with seven thousand men. The latter general had orders to co-operate promptly with the Commander-in-chief, as soon as the British designs were more definitely known. On November 12th, Washington, after reconnoitring the posts in the Highlands, passed over the Hudson River into New Jersey and within a few hours reached Fort Lee, the headquarters of Greene, who was in general command of the fortifications in that vicinity. On account of the recent movements of the enemy, Washington had been inclined to think that it would not be prudent to hazard the men and stores at Fort Washington, which stood on the eastern bank of the Hudson, directly opposite Fort Lee. Several days before his arrival at the latter place, he had written to Greene about abandoning Fort Washington, “but as you are on the spot,” he had said in his letter to that officer,

“ I leave it to you to give such orders, as to evacuating Mount Washington, as you may judge best.” Greene, to whose discretion the withdrawal was thus left, believed that the fort could be held, and he increased the garrison under Colonel Robert Magaw to nearly three thousand men. Putnam appears to have approved Greene’s course. The disaster, which Washington feared, was to follow soon after the arrival of the Commander-in-chief at Fort Lee, for the enemy were preparing to attack Fort Washington with an overwhelming force. On November 15th, a message came from General Howe, demanding the surrender of the garrison. Colonel Magaw returned a spirited refusal to the British commander, and sent an express to the officers at Fort Lee with a copy of the letter. Greene and Putnam immediately took boat to cross the river to Fort Washington and encourage the men. It happened that Washington had ridden from Fort Lee to Hackensack that day. On learning that the garrison under Magaw had been summoned to surrender, he returned at once, as we learn from his own story :

“ Immediately upon receiving an account of this transaction, I came from Hackinsac to this place [Fort Lee] and had partly crossed the North River when I met General Putnam and General Greene, who were just returning from thence [Fort Washington], and informed me that the troops were in high spirits and would make a good defence ; and, it being late at night, I returned.”

The anxious night wore away, and in the morning the British approached to begin the attack on the various field fortifications of which Fort Washington was the citadel. The three intrenched lines of Harlem Heights, crossing Manhattan Island, were to the south.

These defences seemed to be in danger. Thither the chief American officers went :

“General Washington, General Putnam, General Mercer, and myself,” says General Greene, “went to the island to determine what was best to be done ; but just at the instant we stepped on board the boat the enemy made their appearance on the hill where the Monday action [battle of Harlem Heights on Monday, September 16, 1776] was, and began a severe cannonade with several field pieces. Our guards soon fled, the enemy advanced up to the second line [at One Hundred and Forty-Seventh Street]. This was done while we were crossing the river and getting upon the hill [the old headquarters at the Morris House, from which place the American Generals watched the enemy’s approach]. The enemy made several marches to the right and to the left—I suppose to reconnoitre the fortifications and lines. There we all stood in a very awkward situation. As the disposition was made and the enemy advancing, we durst not attempt to make any new disposition ; indeed, we saw nothing amiss. We all urged his Excellency to come off. I offered to stay, General Putnam did the same, and so did General Mercer ; but his Excellency thought it best for us all to come off together, which we did.” \*

Having re-crossed the Hudson River to the western side, Washington, Putnam, Greene, Mercer, and other American officers took their stand on the brow of the Palisades, whence they watched with intense solicitude the assault upon the works. The British were closing in upon Fort Washington from different directions. Greene continues with an account of what he and his companions saw and heard from their new position :

“The enemy came up Harlem River and landed a party at headquarters [Morris House], which was upon the back of our people in the lines. A disorderly retreat soon took place ;

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\* Letter to General Henry Knox, quoted in Noah Brooks’s *Life of General Knox*.

without much firing the people retreated into the fort. On the north side of the fort there was a very heavy fire for a long while ; and as they had the advantage of the ground, I apprehend the enemy's loss must be great. After the troops retreated into the fort, very few guns were fired. The enemy approached within small-arm fire of the lines and sent in a flag, and the garrison capitulated in an hour."

Thus Fort Washington with its valuable stores and more than two thousand men passed into British hands, but the capture had cost the enemy nearly five hundred men in killed and wounded. The American generals made preparations at once to evacuate Fort Lee, for they realised that it was useless to attempt to obstruct the passage of the Hudson River with only one fort, and they expected that the British would advance without delay against that stronghold. But before all the ammunition and stores could be removed, the enemy were found, on the morning of November 20th, to have crossed the river in large numbers, with the evident intention of forming a line across from the place of their landing, on the west bank of the Hudson, to Hackensack Bridge, and thereby hemming in the whole garrison at Fort Lee between the Hudson and Hackensack Rivers.

"However, we were lucky enough to gain the Bridge before them," writes Washington, "by which means we saved our men, but were obliged to leave some hundred barrels of flour, most of our cannon, and a considerable parcel of tents and baggage."

Putnam, Greene, Stirling, and Mercer were the principal officers who accompanied Washington in the distressing retreat which now began when, with less than four thousand men, he fell back before the British. On November 21st, the Americans crossed the Passaic



River and marched south-westward to Newark. Here they remained five days, the Commander-in-chief sending meanwhile repeated messages to Lee, who was in charge of the troops at North Castle, to bring on his part of the army. But that arrogant General was scheming to supersede Washington in the chief command and dallied in obeying orders. The approach of the enemy compelled the Americans, on Thursday morning, November 28th, to leave Newark for New Brunswick.

Three days later, Cornwallis with his columns came up to New Brunswick in the pursuit ; and the Americans, after a lively skirmish, broke down the bridge over the Raritan and continued their retreat to Princeton. By this time the patriotic force with Washington had dwindled to three thousand men.

"The enemy have pressed us very hard from place to place," narrates Greene, who had travelled at Putnam's side most of the way on this discouraging march. "The time for which our troops were engaged expired, and they went off by whole brigades, notwithstanding the enemy lay within two or three hours' march of us, and our force remaining not near half equal to theirs. The virtue of the Americans is put to a trial : if they turn out with spirit all will go on well ; but if the militia refuses their aid, the people must submit to the servitude they deserve. But I think it is impossible that Americans can behave so poltroonish. . . . The enemy's footsteps are marked with destruction wherever they go. There is no difference made between the Whigs and Tories ; all fare alike. They take the clothes off on the people's back. The distress they spread wherever they go exceeds all description." \*

From Princeton to Trenton was the next move by the hard-pressed Americans. Putnam does not appear

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\* *Life of Major-General Nathanael Greene*, by G.W. Greene, vol. i, p. 281.



to have been with the main army at this stage of the forced retreat, for Washington, on arriving at the latter place, addressed a letter to him,\* with instructions to bring on the detachment under his command. Putnam soon arrived at Trenton and, by December 8th, all the American troops had gained the opposite side of the Delaware, Putnam with his usual bravery "being among the last of the fugitive army to cross the river." The security of Philadelphia was Washington's great object.

"If we can keep the enemy from entering Philadelphia," he said, in writing to Congress at this time that tried men's souls, "and keep the communication by water open for supplies, we may yet make a stand, if the country will come to our assistance till our new levies can be collected. If the measure of fortifying the city should be adopted, some skilful person should immediately view the grounds, and begin to trace out the lines and works. I am informed there is a French engineer of eminence [Kosciusko] in Philadelphia at this time ; if so, he will be the most proper."

Washington had just penned the foregoing words when he received important news from Philadelphia :

"General Mifflin is this moment come up," he added in his letter, "and tells me that all the military stores yet remain in Philadelphia. This makes the immediate fortifying of the city so necessary that I have desired General Mifflin to return to take charge of the stores ; and have ordered Major-General Putnam immediately down to superintend the works and give the necessary directions."

It was December 9th, when Putnam was ordered to take the chief command at Philadelphia. He hastened forward to that city with the greatest possible speed.

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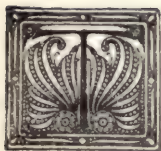
\* The original letter from Washington to Putnam, dated Trenton, Dec. 3, 1776, is owned by Mrs. Mary Putnam Bosworth, of New York City.



## CHAPTER XXII

AT PHILADELPHIA AND PRINCETON

1776-1777



THE condition of affairs at Philadelphia in the early winter of 1776 is described by Putnam immediately after he arrived to assume command of the city.

"All things in this city," he wrote to Washington on December 12th, "remain in confusion, for want of men to put them in order. The citizens are generally with you. The Continental recruits are clothing and arming as fast as possible, and are employed on guard and fatigue duty, for which there is scarce a relief. A party are now going to the Jerseys, to bring off all the craft out of the creeks.

"The Council of Safety have this day issued orders for every able-bodied man to be enrolled and put to work in throwing up the lines. I have reconnoitred the ground round the city, in company with General Mifflin, and the French Engineers, who are preparing a draft of the lines, which we are to begin to-morrow. The principal stores are removed to Christiana Bridge." \*

On the same day that he dictated the foregoing letter, Putnam established martial law in the city where

\* *American Archives*, Fifth Series, vol. iii, p. 1180.

confusion reigned in this dark hour of the struggle for American independence :

“ The late advances by the enemy towards this place oblige the General to request the inhabitants of this city not to appear in the streets after ten o'clock at night, as he has given orders to the piquet-guard to arrest and confine all persons who may be found in the streets after that hour. Physicians and others having essential business, are directed to call at Head-quarters for passes.”

In consequence of a rumour that Philadelphia was to be burned on account of the threatening capture of the city by the British, Putnam issued the following :

“ HEAD-QUARTERS, PHILADELPHIA,  
December 13, 1776.

“ The General has been informed that some weak or wicked men have maliciously reported that it is the design and wish of the officers and men in the Continental Army to burn and destroy the city of Philadelphia. To counteract such a false and scandalous report, he thinks it necessary to inform the inhabitants who propose to remain in the city, that he has received positive orders from the honourable Continental Congress, and from his Excellency General Washington, to secure and protect the city of Philadelphia against all invaders and enemies. The General will consider every attempt to burn the city of Philadelphia as a crime of the blackest dye, and will, without ceremony, punish capitally any incendiary who shall have the hardness and cruelty to attempt it.”

The citizens in general, with the exception of the Quakers, were called by Putnam into military service. Although he exempted Quakers, the patriotic General had little patience with the peculiar tenets of these persons who were opposed on principle to military duty. “ Drones of society,” he called them in an outspoken

letter to Governor William Livingston of New Jersey, in which he expressed strong doubt as to the wisdom of allowing them "to remain unmolested." But any other course than that which Putnam reluctantly adopted would only have tended to disgust the moderate men of either side, without bringing into service any valuable recruits, and so the General was obliged to forbear with the Quakers, repugnant as it was to his nature. His position was an exceedingly trying one, for many persons who were strongly disaffected towards the American cause, were ready to take advantage of any amnesty offered by the British Commander-in-chief. Putnam made a diligent use of his authority to apprehend all delinquents and to exact personal service or levy proportionate fines. He exerted strenuous efforts to arouse all the inhabitants of Philadelphia to the necessity of repelling the expected approach of the enemy. The depreciation of the American currency in the alarming crisis was another matter to be dealt with, and Putnam announced that the refusal to accept the Continental money at its face value would be considered criminal.

The nervous timidity of the Continental Congress, in session at Philadelphia, is easily discernible in their acts during the gloomy period when the city was, beyond all question, the object of the enemy's movements. Major-General Putnam and Brigadier-General Mifflin, as we learn from the "Proceedings," were soon summoned to consult with Congress in regard to the adjournment of that deliberative body to some other place on account of the approach of the British army. The result of the conference is stated by Oliver Wolcott, one of the Connecticut delegates, in a letter from Philadelphia, dated December 13th :



"The Congress, upon the advice of Genls. Putnam and Mifflin (who are now here to provide for the Protection of the Place), as well as the Result of their own Opinion, have adjourned themselves to Baltimore in Maryland, about 110 miles from this City, as it was judged that the Council of America ought not to sit in a Place liable to be interrupted by the rude Disorder of Arms, so that I am at this moment going forward for that place. Whether the Army will succeed in their cruel Designs against this City, must be left to time to discover. Congress have ordered the General [Putnam] to defend it to the last extremity, and God grant that he may be successful in his exertions." \*

The removal of Congress from Philadelphia to Baltimore increased the alarm in the former city, and it was only by the watchfulness of the resolute Putnam that the loyalists were kept from making a serious outbreak. In hastening preparations for the defence of Philadelphia the General overtaxed his strength, and his health, it is stated, "was for awhile impaired by his unrelaxed exertions." For a number of days he had to stay indoors.

At midnight of December 24th, Putnam was aroused from slumber by the arrival of Adjutant-General Reed at his headquarters. This officer had come in haste from Bristol to confer with the General about furnishing troops for a southern diversion into New Jersey. Reed had received a letter from Washington, telling him of a contemplated movement on Christmas night against the Hessian force stationed at Trenton. For the accomplishment of this plan to cross the Delaware and surprise the enemy, Washington needed the co-

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\* *Memoirs of Long Island Historical Society*, vol. iii. There is a similar letter by Robert Morris to Silas Deane in Stevens's *Facsimiles of MSS. in European Archives relating to America*, vol. xiv.



operation of the several American divisions which were posted on the west bank of the river from Coryell's Ferry to Bristol. Reed and Cadwalader, the commanding officers of the troops at the latter place, expected to join Colonel Griffin on the opposite side of the Delaware, who, with two companies of Virginians and some militia, had been successful in driving a party of Hessians back to Mount Holly. While the united detachments of Americans, forming the right wing of the army occupied the attention of the enemy's posts below Trenton, Washington himself could advance with the main body of troops against the garrison in that town. This project seemed feasible, for the diminishing American army had been reinforced by a detachment under Gates from the Northern Department and by Sullivan with the troops belonging to Lee, who, on his way to join the Commander-in-chief, had been captured by the British while he was at an unguarded inn.

"Prepare and concert with Griffin," wrote Washington to Reed and Cadwalader, who were assigned to the southern operations in the movements which he boldly planned to disconcert the enemy; "attack as many of their posts as you possibly can with a prospect of success; the more we can attack at the same instant the more confusion we shall spread, and the greater good will result from it."

But Reed and Cadwalader found that the proposed co-operation with Griffin was impracticable. In this emergency they decided to induce Putnam to cross the Delaware at Cooper's Ferry with such troops as he had, while the Philadelphia militia should make a similar movement at or near Bristol.

And so Reed had come to Philadelphia, on the night

of December 24th, to confide to Putnam the secret plans for the attack on Trenton on Christmas night and to obtain his help in carrying out Washington's wishes in regard to a southern diversion. Putnam, who was recovering from his recent illness, was ready to do all in his power to further the enterprise, and he thought that he could furnish the needed assistance. Reed accordingly dispatched the following note to Cadwalader in the morning :

"General Putnam has determined to cross the river with as many men as he can collect, which he says will be about 500; he is now mustering them and endeavouring to get Proctor's company of artillery to go with them. I wait to know what success he meets with, and the progress he makes; but at all events I shall be with you this afternoon."

But Putnam soon discovered indications that the Tory element in Philadelphia would rise during his absence; and he, therefore, felt obliged to withhold the troops which he expected to forward. Before the arrival of Reed in the city, the General had sent his son Daniel, who had recently been appointed one of his aides-de-camp, with a message to Washington, reporting his improved health and the progress of military affairs under his direction.

With increased effort Putnam urged forward the work of building the defences which had been laid out from the Schuylkill River, covering the high ground around Germantown in an easterly direction to the Delaware River. He began to remove a large quantity of supplies from the city. Meanwhile he awaited in great suspense the news of the Trenton undertaking, which the Commander-in-chief had planned so cautiously. The weather on Christmas night had been

very inauspicious. Could it be that, in the blinding tempest of hail and sleet, driven by a fierce north-east wind, Washington had made his daring venture? At last Putnam received the thrilling tidings of what had been accomplished; how the chief commander, with twenty-five hundred men, unsupported by the other divisions of his army, had crossed the Delaware, despite the huge masses of floating ice which made the passage of the river so extremely dangerous; how, in the teeth of the storm, the brave troops had pushed rapidly on towards Trenton, nine miles away; how at dawn they had driven in the enemy's pickets at the point of the bayonet and entered the town by different roads; how, after a quick, sharp skirmish, in which only two of their own number were killed, they had captured a thousand Hessians who, unsuspecting of the approach of the Americans, had been indulging in Christmas revels.

The reality of this brilliant victory, which caused great rejoicing among all patriots, was made very vivid, a few days later, to the citizens of Philadelphia, for the Hessian prisoners, followed by the captured arms and banners, were marched through the streets of the city and the whole populace flocked to see them. This parade of triumph was doubtless intended to encourage the people and to show them that the dreaded Hessians could be conquered by the untrained troops of America.\* The Hessians, after being paraded, were conducted to the city barracks, which had been vacated by the American soldiers in accordance with Putnam's directions. "You are immediately to remove your men out of the Barrok," was his characteristic misspelled order to his officers, "to make room for the hashon Prisoners."

\* Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*.

The prisoners were kept in the city about a week and then they were marched to Baltimore, where Congress was sitting. On New Year's Day, when they were still in Philadelphia, the Hessian officers were taken in a body to call on General Putnam. He received them very hospitably. "He shook hands with each of us," one of them has recorded in his journal, "and we all had to drink a glass of Madeira with him." "This old gray-beard may be a good, honest man," the same writer comments, "but nobody but the rebels would have made him a general." \* Criticism of the military rank of Putnam was not uncommon, even on the patriot side. From the moment of his arrival to take command in the city, certain fastidious Philadelphians had expressed great surprise that the unpolished Yankee fighter was ever made a general.

At the time that the public rejoicings were breaking forth throughout the colonies over the Trenton victory, Washington was alert to retard the progress of the British, who were advancing to retaliate the loss of their Hessian force. After returning into Pennsylvania with the prisoners, he had again crossed the Delaware and occupied Trenton. On the near approach of the enemy to this place, he had withdrawn his troops beyond the Assunpink, a small river which flows into the Delaware just below the town. So confident was Cornwallis of being able to entrap the Americans in this position, that he little suspected Washington's scheme against the British post at Princeton. The following hurried message from Adjutant-General Reed was written to Putnam a few minutes before the midnight march began:

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\* Journal of the Regiment von Lossberg (Piel).



“EAST SIDE OF TRENTON CREEK,  
“January 2d, 1777, twelve o'clock at night.

“DEAR GENERAL PUTNAM,—The enemy advanced upon us to-day. We came to the east side of the river or creek, which runs through Trenton, when it was resolved to make a forced march and attack the enemy in Princeton. In order to do this with the greatest security our baggage is sent off to Burlington. His Excellency begs you will march immediately forward with all the force you can collect at Crosswicks where you will find a very advantageous post; your advanced party at Allentown. You will also send a good guard for our baggage wherever it may be. Let us hear from you as often as possible. We shall do the same by you.

“Yours,

“J. REED.”

In compliance with Washington's wishes, as communicated by Reed, Putnam hastened forward with as many men as he could muster—seven or eight hundred in all. From his letters\* to the Pennsylvania Council of Safety, written on the march, we learn that he was in Bristol on January 5th. The next morning he crossed the Delaware and advanced to Bordentown, where he found a body of Continental militia and, with his force increased to about one thousand men, he proceeded to Trenton, which had already been evacuated by the British. Here Putnam received a letter from Washington, describing the success at Princeton :

“PLUCKEMIN, 5 January, 1777.

“DEAR GENERAL,—Fortune has favored us in an attack on Princeton. General Howe advanced upon Trenton, which we evacuated in the evening of the 2d of this instant, and drew up the troops in the south side of Mill Creek, and continued in that position until dark, then marched for Princeton, which we reached next morning about nine o'clock. There were three regiments quartered there of the British troops, which we

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\* These letters of Putnam are printed in the *Pennsylvania Archives*, vol. v.



attacked and routed. The number of the killed, wounded, and taken prisoners amounts to about five or six hundred. We lost several officers and about thirty privates. General Mercer is badly wounded, if not mortally. After the action we immediately marched for this place. I shall remove from hence to Morristown, there shall wait a few days and refresh the troops, during which time I shall keep a strict watch upon the enemy's motions. They appear to be panic-struck, and I am in some hopes of driving them out of the Jerseys. It is thought advisable for you to march the troops under your command to Crosswicks, and keep a strict watch upon the enemy in that quarter. If the enemy continue at Brunswick, you must act with great circumspection, lest you meet with a surprise. As we have made two successful attacks upon the enemy by way of surprise, they will be pointed with resentment and if there is any possibility of retaliating, they will attempt it. You will give out your strength to be twice as great as it is. Forward on all the baggage and scattered troops belonging to this division of the army, as soon as may be.

"You will keep as many spies out as you will see proper. A number of horsemen, in the dress of the country, must be constantly going backwards and forwards for this purpose, and if you discover any motion of the enemy, which you can depend upon, and which you think of consequence, let me be informed thereof as soon as possible by express.

"I am, dear General, yours, &c.

"G. WASHINGTON."

On January 8th, Putnam marched from Trenton to Crosswicks. A message from the Commander-in-chief reached him at the latter place, directing him to move forward with his men to Princeton. But Putnam expected that the enemy would attempt to regain their lost position, and so he awaited the arrival of a reinforcement from Philadelphia, for which he had sent. Soon another letter came from Washington, with orders to advance, and again the General delayed, thinking that he was justified in doing so, because of the

apparent necessity of obtaining a larger force, and of guarding, meanwhile, the route to Mount Holly. Washington, surprised that Putnam stayed at Crosswicks, wrote to Reed from Morristown :

“ I very much approve of your visiting Genl. Putnam, as I cannot acc’t for his remaining at Crosswicks instead of removing to Princeton, as I have desired in several of my Letters. I would have him keep nothing at Princeton (except two or three days’ provisions) but what can be moved off at an hour’s warning—in that case, if good Scouting Parties are kept constantly out, no possible damage can happen to the Troops under his Command ; who are to retreat, in case they are compelled to leave Princeton, towards the mountains, so as to form a junction with the army under my immediate Command. This will serve as a direction to him in removing the stores if any yet remain at Princeton. I would have no time lost in removing the Flour from the Mills on Millstone, lest the Enemy should attempt & avail themselves of it. I would also have Genl. Putnam draw his Forage as much as possible from the Vicinity of Brunswick, that the Enemy may thereby be distressed.”

On January 15th, the annoyed Commander-in-chief expressed himself thus in another letter to Reed :

“ Many days ago I wrote to Genl. Putnam supposing him to be at Princeton to have the stores rescued from the hands of the Militia who had borne them off, and had no doubt but he had done it. What in the name of Heaven can he be doing at Crosswicks I know not, after my repeated wishes to hear of him at Princeton. Surely he is there by this time.”

By the 21st of January, Putnam reached Princeton without having met with the opposition from the enemy which he had expected. He had been especially wary, for many of the men under his command, whose terms of enlistment had expired, refused to remain in the ranks until their places could be supplied

by new recruits. With his diminished army, the General was gravely apprehensive of the result of an encounter with a hostile force.

Among the sick and wounded British prisoners at Princeton, was Captain McPherson of the 17th Regiment of the royal army. This Scotchman had been shot near the lungs by a musket ball in the battle of Princeton. When the British fell back before the Americans, he had been left in the town and, until Putnam took possession of the place, he had received little attention from the surgeon. The General, on finding the neglected and suffering Scotchman, secured medical attendance at once for him and showed so much kindness that the wounded man could hardly believe that his benefactor belonged to the "rebel" army.

"Pray, sir, what countryman are you?" McPherson is said to have asked Putnam.

"An American," was the answer.

"Not a Yankee?" quickly came the query from the sick bed.

"A full-blooded one," replied the General with emphatic and good-humoured pride.

"By God, I am sorry for that," rejoined McPherson; "I did not think there could be so much goodness and generosity in an American, or, indeed, in anybody but a Scotchman!"

There is another story relating to Putnam and McPherson, for which, as well as the one just told, Humphreys is the authority. It seems that the wounded officer, who was doubtful of recovery, asked if a friend in the British army stationed at Brunswick might come to see him. Putnam was, at first, somewhat perplexed what to do. He was unwilling that

the enemy should have any opportunity to learn how few American troops there were at Princeton, and yet he was too tender-hearted to deny McPherson's pathetic request. An expedient, however, soon suggested itself to the resourceful General. He dispatched a messenger under a flag of truce to the British camp, with instructions not to return with McPherson's friend until after dark. In the evening, lights were placed in all the rooms of the College buildings and in every apartment of the houses throughout the town. During the entire night, Putnam manœuvred his insignificant force, sometimes altogether and sometimes in small detachments, past the room where McPherson and his friend were. It was afterwards learned that the visitor, on his return to Brunswick, reported to the British commander that the American troops at Princeton could not, by the lowest estimate, number less than four or five thousand men. Thus did Putnam ingeniously succeed in complying with Washington's wish that he deceive the enemy into believing that his force was many times greater than it actually was.

Putnam was continually on the outlook for opportunities to harass the British, who had been compelled to evacuate West Jersey. His division formed the right wing of the American army, of which the main body lay encamped with Washington at Morristown, while Heath's division on the Hudson constituted the left wing. The post at Princeton, within a few miles of Brunswick and Amboy, whither the enemy had withdrawn, was much to Putnam's liking, for the men, under his directions, could hover in small scouting parties about the British in winter quarters, interrupting their communications, cutting off their supplies, and surprising their foraging parties and pickets.



In a letter to the Pennsylvania Council of Safety, Putnam tells of the brave conduct of some of his men in capturing certain Tories, in the pay of the British Government, who had then taken post at Lawrence Island in the Raritan River and were throwing up works there:

“PRINCETON, Feb 18th, 1777.

“GENTLEMEN,

“Last night Col. Neilson, with a party of about 150 men, attacked sixty belonging to Cortland Skinner’s Brigade, at Lawrence’s Island, under command of Majr Richd Stockton, formerly an Inhabitant of this place—the Enemy’s renowned land Pilot—the Colonel took the whole, among which were this Stockton, a Captain & three or four Subaltern officers; the enemy had four killed, and one wounded—we had one killed—this you may depend on to be a fact. Col. Neilson is just arrived here. I shall forward the prisoners on in a day or two to you—50 of the Bedford County Riflemen of your State, what I detached from this place, were with Col. Neilson—the whole officers & men, both belonging to that County & the Militia of this State, behaved with great bravery, such as would do honour to veteran Soldiers; there are also thirty or sixty stand of arms, which I think the Middlesex Militia ought to have. The Bearer I send purposely to acquaint you with the Circumstance.

“I am Gentlemen, with Esteem,

“your Hum servt,

“ISRAEL PUTNAM.”

The captured Stockton and his men needed to be guarded with special precaution, and Putnam gave strict orders to the officer who was appointed to conduct them to Philadelphia, that “no Indulgence be allowed the Villains which affords them a possibility of escape.” When Washington heard that Stockton and his men had been sent down to Philadelphia in



irons and were kept in close confinement in that city, he was inclined to criticise such treatment of them. But Putnam, who was usually lenient to prisoners, advised so strongly that these "land pirates" of desperate character be severely dealt with, that they were kept awhile longer chained in guarded cells. Soon after the capture of the Stockton party, the British sent out a foraging band towards Bound Brook, but these marauders were repulsed by some of Putnam's men, who formed an ambush and surprised the enemy.

Towards the end of the winter, the Pennsylvania Board of War sent Putnam the news that a "most villainous plot," by certain disaffected persons, to betray Philadelphia to the British had been discovered, and also that a message had been received from Benjamin Franklin, then in Paris, reporting prospect of aid from the French Government in the American struggle for liberty. In the early spring of 1777 there were indications of a general military movement by the British. The vigilant Putnam reported immediately to the President of the Continental Congress the signs of the beginning of a hostile campaign, which evidently had for its object the capture of Philadelphia.

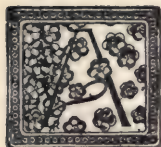




## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE COMMAND OF THE HUDSON HIGHLANDS

1777-1778



ALTHOUGH it seemed probable that the British at Brunswick and Amboy would open the campaign of 1777 by advancing against Philadelphia, Washington did not confine his attention to the preparations for the defence of that city.

Fully aware of the importance of guarding the Hudson River, to prevent communication by the enemy with Canada, he decided to put a major-general in command of the Highlands, while he himself, with the main army, stood ready to move southward and thwart any attempt by General Howe to capture Philadelphia. Benedict Arnold, who had just been raised to the rank of major-general for gallant conduct in repelling marauders whom Tory-Governor Tryon had led into Connecticut, seemed a suitable officer for the chief command on the Hudson, but he was too much occupied in seeking a "vindication" for a slight which he felt that Congress had passed upon him by some recent promotions. Putnam was then selected for the Highlands, and was ordered to Peekskill, which, on account of its central location on the Hudson, had been desig-

nated as the encampment for nearly all the New England and New York recruits. To Brigadier-General Alexander McDougall, who had succeeded Heath in charge of the troops there, Washington wrote on May 16th, telling him that Putnam would soon arrive to take the chief command of that department, and he added :

“ You are well acquainted with the old gentleman’s temper ; he is active, disinterested, and open to conviction, and I therefore hope, that, by affording him the advice and assistance, which your knowledge of the post enables you to do, you will be very happy in your command under him.”

On reaching Peekskill, Putnam, in accordance with Washington’s instructions, directed his “ particular and immediate attention to fixing the boom ” for greater security against any attempt by the British vessels to force a passage up the Hudson. This obstruction of the river, recently recommended by a special committee consisting of Greene, Knox, and other general officers, was to extend from Fort Montgomery—which, with its companion stronghold, Fort Clinton, stood on the western side of the Hudson—to the opposite shore, where rose the sharp promontory known as St. Anthony’s Nose. After taking preliminary steps towards the construction of the proposed boom and chain, Putnam assumed the command in person at Peekskill. He established his headquarters at the house of John Mandeville.\* Here a letter dated “ Morristown, May 25, 1777,” reached him from Washington, suggesting an expedition down the Hudson to surprise the British detachment at Kingsbridge.

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\* *Congressional Report*, No. 452, 35th Congress. *The General Orders of Putnam in the Highlands* have been edited by W. C. Ford.

On May 28th, Washington marched his troops from Morristown to the heights of Middlebrook, within ten miles of Brunswick, in order to keep General Howe from pushing across New Jersey to Philadelphia. The British manœuvres to force the American army from its new position resulted in the abandonment by Putnam of the project to surprise the enemy's force at Kingsbridge, for, before he had time to undertake the enterprise, Washington ordered him to send forward to New Jersey, Generals Parsons, McDougall, and Glover, with all the Continental troops at Peekskill, except one thousand men, which number, in conjunction with the militia at that post, was deemed equal to the number of the enemy on the east side of the Hudson.

At last, after fruitless efforts to bring on a general engagement or to outflank the Americans, Howe withdrew on June 30th from New Jersey, taking his whole force over to Staten Island. A few days before this evacuation by the British, Washington had learned that General Burgoyne, with a hostile force, was moving down from Canada by way of Lake Champlain, and also that Colonel St. Leger had gone up the St. Lawrence to Lake Ontario, and would lead British troops, Canadians, and Indians through the Mohawk Valley. On receiving this news, the American Commander-in-chief dispatched orders to Putnam to hold in readiness to move up the Hudson River, at a moment's notice, four regiments of Massachusetts troops which were then at Peekskill, and also to hire sloops at Albany for their transportation. Immediately after the departure of Howe's army from New Jersey, another message was hurried off to the General in the Highlands, telling him that the British troops under Howe would probably ascend the Hudson River and



attempt to force the passes of the Highlands. This news caused great excitement among the soldiers at Peekskill. Putnam made some effort to obtain additional militia, in accordance with Washington's urgent instructions, but, with his wonted good humour and undaunted spirit, he devoted his chief attention to emboldening the men already with him.

The loss of Ticonderoga was reported in the Peekskill camp on July 9th, but, as Webb, Putnam's former aide-de-camp, who was now colonel of a Connecticut regiment, records in his journal, "General Putnam did not credit the intelligence." The rumour of the disaster was, however, soon confirmed by later tidings in a letter from Washington who, after the evacuation of New Jersey by the British, had moved back from Middlebrook to Morristown, and was, with his troops at Pompton, ready to co-operate with Putnam in the Highlands at a moment's notice. From Pompton Washington hastened with his troops to Ramapo Clove, a rugged defile in the Highlands, near Haverstraw, and sent the divisions of Sullivan and Stirling across the Hudson River to Peekskill. On July 20th he advanced eleven miles within the Clove, in consequence of a rumour that the British were approaching from New York. The alarm proved to be false, and on July 24th, Washington and his troops were again near the entrance of the Clove. Meantime, Putnam received urgent messages from the Commander-in-chief, bidding him to obtain all the information possible in regard to the enemy's movements. It was soon found that the British fleet of more than two hundred ships, carrying an army of eighteen thousand men, had sailed out of New York Harbour, and that seven thousand men under Sir Henry Clinton remained to hold the city.



Hitherto, during July, Howe's "conduct" had been "extremely embarrassing," but Washington now felt sure that the British commander was bound for Philadelphia. The American divisions under Sullivan and Stirling were, therefore, ordered down from Peekskill to increase the force for the protection of Philadelphia.

But Putnam, misled by an intercepted letter from Howe to Burgoyne, which had just been brought into the Peekskill camp, and which the British Commander-in-chief had artfully contrived should fall into American hands, could not believe that the enemy had actually departed for Philadelphia. He thought their destination must be Boston, and that they would return and ascend the Hudson River. He accordingly wrote to Washington on July 24th to that effect, and enclosed the intercepted letter, which was in the handwriting of General Howe. Washington was not deceived by Howe's artifice, and urged Putnam, who was loath to detach troops, to send on the reinforcement. Putnam was still of the opinion that Washington was mistaken, and reluctantly forwarded the divisions of Sullivan and Stirling. He objected again to having his force in the Highlands weakened, but was obliged to comply with another message from the Commander-in-chief and send McDougall's and Huntington's brigades to the west side of the Hudson, where they were to be in readiness to march on the arrival of further orders. The number of soldiers at Peekskill and in that vicinity was reduced to less than three thousand. "You will see, sir," wrote Putnam to Washington, "how exposed and weak we are at this post, as well as the whole Eastern country in case an attack is made on any part."

Meantime, Washington, with the main body of troops,

had set out for the Delaware. On reaching Coryell's Ferry, he learned that the enemy's fleet had arrived at the Capes of Delaware. This important information was communicated at once to Putnam.

"You will therefore please to order the two brigades," said Washington in announcing the news to the General, "which were thrown over the North River to march immediately towards Philadelphia through Morristown and over Coryell's Ferry, where boats will be ready for them. The troops are to march as expeditiously as possible without injuring the men. I beg you will endeavour to make up your garrison with militia from Connecticut and New York, as soon as possible; and I desire that you will forward this account by express to General Schuyler and to the Eastern States. I hope, as they now have nothing to fear from General Howe, that they will turn out their force both Continental and militia to oppose Burgoyne."

Washington pushed on with his army towards Philadelphia, but what was his surprise on his arrival at Chester to hear that the British fleet had put out to sea again! He now suspected that, after all, the whole movement had been a feint and that Howe would at once return to the Hudson. Sullivan's division and McDougall's and Huntington's brigades were therefore ordered back to the Highlands, and Washington held himself ready to follow as soon as the British plans could be more definitely ascertained. A week went by and things became hourly more perplexing.

At this critical period, when the enemy might soon come up the Hudson, Putnam was exercising his authority in the Highlands with a firm hand. Severe punishment was in store for all persons who deserted from the American ranks. After an offender had been executed at Peekskill, this notice was posted :

"I wish that all who have any inclination to join our enemies from motives of fear, ambition or avarice, would take warning by this example and avoid the dreadful calamities that will inevitably follow such vile and treasonable practices.

"ISRAEL PUTNAM." \*

The fearless energy of the General was evinced by the way in which he dealt with British spies. The proceedings of the court martial† at Peekskill show that "Edmund Palmer was arraigned and tried upon a Charge of Plundering, robbing, and carrying off Cattle, Goods, &c., from the well-affected Inhabitants and for being a Spy for the Enemy." The evidence against Palmer was overwhelming, and the "Noted Tory Robber and Spy" was condemned to be hanged. Putnam "approved the sentence" and issued an order for all the troops to parade "on y<sup>e</sup> hill, By the gal-lows" on Friday morning, August 8, 1777, to witness the execution. Before the appointed date for the hanging, Captain Montague, in the British ship *The Mercury*, brought a message under a flag of truce to Verplanck's Point and it was forwarded from there to Peekskill. Sir Henry Clinton, who was in charge of the British troops in New York, had sent up to claim Palmer as a lieutenant in the King's service. He asserted that the American general represented no acknowledged sovereignty, and so could not possess any legal authority for inflicting the death-penalty. He threatened vengeance if Palmer should be executed. But Putnam, with prompt decision and unswerving determination, sent back this terse and bold reply :

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\* From the original document owned by Frederick Lally, of Lansingburgh, N. Y.

† *Calendar of New York Historical Manuscripts*, vol. ii., p. 258.

"HEAD-QUARTERS, 7 August, 1777.

"Edmund Palmer, an officer in the enemy's service, was taken as a spy lurking within our lines ; he has been tried as a spy, condemned as a spy, and shall be executed as a spy, and the flag is ordered to depart immediately.

"ISRAEL PUTNAM."

"P. S. He has been accordingly executed." \*

During nearly the whole of August the whereabouts of Howe's fleet remained a mystery to the Americans. Washington kept the main army in a position from which it could move quickly either toward Philadelphia or towards the Hudson. The farmer-soldiers in the Highlands, who little realised the exigencies of the campaign, became anxious, when autumn approached, to go home for harvest work, and it was with difficulty that they were prevailed upon to continue in the service.

"The Season of the Year," said Washington, in reply to a letter from Putnam, who had reported the restlessness of his men, "is, to be sure, inconvenient for the militia to be out ; but the necessity of the case requires that as many as possibly can must be retained in the service ; for if General Burgoyne persists in his advance upon our northern army, we must afford them support, or suffer him to make himself master of all the Country above."

Burgoyne, in his advance from Ticonderoga, had already captured Fort Edward and, notwithstanding the obstinate resistance by the Americans, had forced Schuyler's army as far south as Stillwater, about thirty miles above Albany. St. Leger, with his motley force from Oswego, had made his way through the woods of

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\* Some writers, in quoting this famous message, give Palmer's first name as "Nathan," but the official records show that it was "Edmund."



Central New York and was before Fort Stanwix in the Mohawk Valley. But both of these divisions of the British army received a check in August—Burgoyne's troops, by the "great stroke struck by General Stark near Bennington," as Washington afterwards called the brilliant victory of Putnam's old comrade; St. Leger's Tories and Indians, by the heroic advance of General Herkimer and his men to meet the enemy in a bloody hand-to-hand encounter which relieved Fort Stanwix. The news of these successes reached the Peekskill camp just about the time of the arrival of a message which announced that Howe had at last appeared at the head of Chesapeake Bay and was landing his forces. Affairs northward and southward seemed to put the Highlands out of immediate danger of an attack, and Putnam now yielded to the earnest solicitations of some of his men and permitted them to go home for the harvest farming. Unfortunately, the recruits were not as quickly supplied as the General expected. Several regiments of New York militia were forwarded to Peekskill by Governor George Clinton, who was at Fort Montgomery, but Putnam was soon sorely in need of more troops, for Washington met with adversity at Brandywine Creek, in the attempt to oppose the British on their march against Philadelphia, and sent for reinforcements from the Highlands. In the emergency, Putnam endeavoured to get men from his own colony, as appears from the stirring letter which he addressed to the "Colonels and other officers of the Army and Militia of Connecticut" :

"PEEK'S HILL, Sept. 14, 1777, eleven o'clock, P.M.

"GENTLEMEN,— . . . This moment arrived an express from Congress, containing advices that there has been a severe



action [Battle of Brandywine] between General Washington and General Howe last Thursday, [Sept 11] in which the former was obliged to retire with the loss of several field-pieces ; and, in consequence thereof, the Congress have ordered fifteen hundred men to be immediately sent from here to re-enforce General Washington ; which obliges me, for the common safety, to call upon all the officers and soldiers of the Continental troops and militia in the State of Connecticut, that have not special license to be absent, immediately to repair to this post, for the aid and defence thereof, and to defeat and crush our cruel and perfidious foes. And would we, my countrymen, for once lay aside our avarice, oppression, and evil works, for which the land mourns, and the inhabitants thereof are distressed and terrified, and unitedly exert ourselves like freemen, resolved on freedom, through the smiles of Heaven we should put a speedy end to those unnatural disturbers of our peace, and, with them, a period to this unhappy and bloody war, which now ravages and desolates our country, and threatens its inhabitants and their posterity with the most dismal ruin and abject slavery. Such casualties are incident to human affairs, the natural result of general national depravity ; and are avoidable only by reformation and amendment in the public manners of a people.

“Awake, then, to virtue and to great military exertion, and we shall put a speedy and happy issue to this mighty contest.

“ISRAEL PUTNAM.”

Washington had withdrawn nearly all the American troops from New Jersey to his aid in protecting Philadelphia. The British in New York City seized the opportunity to make incursions into the country. As soon as Putnam heard of these marauding expeditions, he ordered General McDougall to cross the Hudson with fifteen hundred men, but the detachment was not in time to overtake a plundering party that was retreating before a small force under Aaron Burr, who had recently resigned as Putnam's aide-de-camp to become lieutenant-colonel in Malcolm's New York regiment,

stationed at Ramapo. The apparent necessity of guarding against further hostile ravages in New Jersey, and also against any attempt by the British in New York to pass up the Hudson and join Burgoyne's army, led Putnam to feel justified in withholding for a while the reinforcement which he was expected to send from the Highlands to Philadelphia. In fact, he had formed a plan for a separate attack on the British at Staten Island, Paulus Hook, York Island, and Long Island. He had been encouraged by Governor Trumbull to expect a large number of militiamen from Connecticut for this purpose. With these reinforcements and the troops already at Peekskill, together with the men who might be obtained from the different outposts, the General, who had received full information in regard to the enemy's strength in New York, believed he could accomplish his object. But Putnam's project was summarily put to an end by Washington, who saw no special advantage to be gained in trying to recapture New York at present. The defence of Philadelphia seemed to the Commander-in-chief the paramount necessity, and he wrote to Putnam, expressing himself very strongly on the subject, and called for a reinforcement. The desired detachment was forwarded to Washington, but the departure of the men from Peekskill was followed by the news that the British force in New York had been increased by the arrival of troops from England. Putnam now became gravely apprehensive of an advance up the Hudson by the enemy. His worst fears were soon to be realised, for it was all too true that Sir Henry Clinton was planning to move up the Hudson with his reinforcement and make a passage for the British ships to Albany. The distressing and disheartening story of the manœuvres of the

enemy, and how, after the fall of the American forts, Putnam was compelled to abandon Peekskill and take post at Fishkill, fourteen miles above, is told in the General's own words to Washington, who had himself met with defeat. Philadelphia was lost, and the Commander-in-chief had been forced from the battlefield near Germantown to the hills above Whitemarsh. There he received this account of the disaster in the Hudson Highlands :

“ FISHKILL, 6 o'clock, Wednesday morning,  
“ 8 October, 1777.

“ DEAR GENERAL,—It is with the utmost reluctance I now sit down to inform you that the enemy, after making a variety of movements up and down the North River, landed, on the morning of the 4th instant, about three thousand men, at Tarrytown ; and, after making an excursion about five miles up the country, they returned and embarked. The morning following they advanced up near King's Ferry, and landed on the east side of the river ; but in the evening part of them reëmbarked, and, the morning after, landed a little above King's Ferry, on the west side ; but the morning, being so exceeding foggy, concealed their scheme, and prevented us from gaining any idea what number of troops they landed. In about three hours we discovered a large fire at the Ferry, which we imagined to be the store-houses, upon which it was thought they only landed with a view of destroying the said houses.

“ The picket and scouts, which we had out, could not learn the exact number of the enemy that were remaining on the east side of the river ; but, from the best accounts, they were about fifteen hundred. At this same time a number of ships, galleys, &c., with about forty flat-bottomed boats, made every appearance of their intentions to land troops, both at Fort Independence and Peekskill Landing.

“ Under all these circumstances, my strength, being not more than twelve hundred Continental troops and three hundred militia, prevented me from detaching off a party to attack the enemy that lay on the east side of the river. After we had

thought it impracticable to quit the heights, which we had then possession of, and attack the enemy, Brigadier-General Parsons and myself went to reconnoitre the ground near the enemy, and, on our return from thence, we were alarmed with a very heavy and hot firing, both of small arms and cannon, at Fort Montgomery, which immediately convinced me that the enemy had landed a large body of men at the time and place before mentioned. Upon which, I immediately detached off five hundred men to reënforce the garrison. But before they could possibly cross the river to their assistance, the enemy, who were far superior in numbers, had possessed themselves of the fort. Never did men behave with more spirit and alacrity than our troops upon this occasion. They repulsed the enemy three times, which were in number at least five to one. Governor Clinton and General James Clinton were both present ; but the engagement continuing until the dusk of the evening, gave them both an opportunity, together with several officers and a number of privates, to make their escape. The loss of the enemy in this affair, Governor Clinton thinks must be very considerable. Our loss, killed and wounded, is by no means equal to what he might have expected. General James Clinton was wounded in the thigh, but I hope not mortally. Governor Clinton arrived at Peekskill the same evening, about eleven o'clock ; and, with the advice of him, General Parsons, and several other officers, it was thought impossible to maintain the post at Peekskill with the force then present against one that the enemy might, in a few hours, bring on the heights in our rear. It was, therefore, agreed that the stores ought to be immediately removed to some secure place, and the troops take post at Fishkill until a reënforcement o' militia should come to their aid.

“ I have repeatedly informed your Excellency of the enemy's design against this post ; but, from some motive or other, you always differed with me in opinion. As this conjecture of mine has, for once, proved right, I cannot omit informing you that my real and sincere opinion is, that they now mean to join General Burgoyne, with the utmost despatch. I have written General Gates, and informed him of the situation of our affairs in this quarter. Governor Clinton is exerting himself in col-



lecting the militia of this State. Brigadier-General Parsons I have sent off to forward in the Connecticut militia, which are now arriving in great numbers. I therefore hope and trust that, in the course of a few days, I shall be able to oppose the progress of the enemy. Time will not permit me to add any thing more respecting the engagement, only that our loss (I believe, from the best information) does not exceed two hundred and fifty, killed, wounded, and taken prisoners. This evening I intend writing you again, but am now very busy. I am, dear General, with sincere regard,

“Your very obedient, humble servant,

“ISRAEL PUTNAM.”\*

In the evening Putnam wrote again to Washington, telling him the plans for resisting future movements of the British, and giving additional details in regard to the loss of the forts in the Hudson Highlands. The enemy were successful in removing the *chevaux-de-frise* which had been labouriously constructed. They then moved farther up the Hudson, burning such American shipping as they found in the river and also houses and mills on the shore. The misfortunes could not have occurred more inopportunately for Putnam. His wife, accompanied by her son, Septimus Gardiner, had recently arrived at the Peekskill headquarters to spend a few weeks. The young man, seventeen years old and of great promise, was to take Burr's place as the General's aide-de-camp, but he had hardly entered upon his duties when he suddenly sickened and died. Putnam deeply mourned this step-son, to whom he was much attached ; and the shock of the great loss enfeebled Mrs. Putnam, who for some time past had been far from strong. The excitement, caused by the fall of the forts and the advance of the British up the river, was too much for the sick woman, although she bore

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\* *Correspondence of the American Revolution*, vol. i., p. 438.



up bravely in the midst of the general consternation. She became so seriously ill, that Putnam did not think it advisable to remove her from the Beverly Robinson house, which he had been occupying as headquarters since her arrival in the Highlands. Notwithstanding his intense solicitude for his wife, the General was obliged to leave her on account of the military exigencies of the hour. He provided the best care that he could for her comfort and safety, and then joined the troops at Fishkill.

Putnam and Governor Clinton, as was arranged between them, moved with their respective forces northward, the former on the east side and the latter on the west side of the Hudson, in order to prevent the British from landing and devastating the country, and also to be ready to fall upon their rear in case they should proceed to Albany and attempt to co-operate with Burgoyne.\* The American generals were unable, however, to keep a hostile party from burning the village of Kingston and from going up the river as far as Livingston Manor and committing other ravages by fire. As a means of disconcerting the enemy and drawing them down the Hudson, Putnam conceived the idea of turning about for a march against New York City with all the Continental troops, including the recruits who were arriving in encouraging numbers from New England. He accordingly sent a messenger in haste to Gates at Saratoga, who had succeeded Schuyler, for his advice in regard to such a diversion. Governor Clinton, whom Putnam had already consulted, did not favour the project, and expressed his opinion that "moving up the river will be the most practicable method to be taken." Soon came

\* *Public Papers of Governor George Clinton*, vol. ii.

a reply from Gates, who also discountenanced Putnam's plan.

"It is certainly right," he wrote, "to collect your whole force, and push up the east side of the river after the enemy. You may be sure they have nothing they care for in New York. Then why should you attack an empty town, which you know to be untenable the moment they bring their men-of-war against it?"

This advice from Gates was accompanied by important news, which changed the aspect of American affairs. At last, after a series of engagements, Burgoyne's army had been surrounded and cut off from supplies, and the British general had asked for a parley with a view to surrender. Welcome as was this intelligence, it reached Putnam at a time when the heavy blow of domestic affliction had again fallen. His wife did not rally from the illness which had weighted his heart with trouble. On October 14th she passed away. Whether or not the General received tidings of her sinking condition in time to be at her bedside when she breathed her last, the records do not tell. In great sorrow of soul, the affectionate husband laid away the form of his beloved helpmeet in the burying-ground of the English Church not far from the Robinson house. After the sad ceremony, Putnam returned to Fishkill. In a letter to Washington, dated October 16th, the General reported the news of the surrender of Burgoyne. He stated also that his own force amounted to about six thousand troops, chiefly militia, and that General Parsons, with about two thousand men, had marched down from Fishkill and reoccupied Peekskill. In closing, Putnam mentioned his personal bereavement.

On October 20th, Putnam was at Red Hook. From there he forwarded to Washington a copy of the terms

of Burgoyne's surrender, as finally agreed upon at Saratoga. Gates, impressed by his own greatness, had neglected to send any dispatch on the subject of the capitulation directly to the Commander-in-chief. In acknowledging the communication from Putnam, Washington suggested a combined movement of all the American troops in the Highlands for the purpose of pursuing the British or intercepting them and taking possession of New York, but before his message reached Red Hook, Sir Henry Clinton, with his whole force of troops and shipping, had returned down the Hudson to the city. After this departure of the enemy, Putnam, who had been patrolling the east side of the river, marched his men down to Fishkill. He was correct in his conjecture that Sir Henry Clinton had given up all plans for attempting anything further in the Highlands. That British general was, indeed, preparing to send forward large reinforcements to General Howe, in order to reduce the American forts on the Delaware and thus hold Philadelphia more securely. Something, Putnam felt, must be done to cause a diversion of the enemy in New York and thereby prevent more hostile troops from being forwarded southward. At this juncture he had word from Saratoga that additional detachments, no longer needed in the Northern Department, were on their way to join him. These patriotic troops were Poor's, Warner's, Learned's, and Paterson's brigades, Col. Van Schaick's regiment, and Morgan's riflemen, amounting to five thousand seven hundred men, which force would make Putnam's division about nine thousand strong, exclusive of Morgan's corps, the artillery-men, and the militia from Connecticut and New York. On learning that his army in the Highlands would be thus increased, the

General at once called together his principal officers to decide upon a disposition of the troops whereby the object of diverting the British in New York could be accomplished. The unanimous advice was that four thousand men should move down the west side of the Hudson and take post near Haverstraw ; that one thousand should be retained in the Highlands to guard the country and repair the forts which the enemy had evacuated ; and that the remainder of Putnam's troops should march down on the east side of the river towards Kingsbridge, except Morgan's corps, which was ordered immediately to join the Commander-in-chief.\* This proposed disposition of the forces had for its object not only to cause a diversion of the British in New York and prevent a reinforcement from being sent to General Howe, but also, if a favourable opportunity presented itself, to attack the city.

But Putnam met with obstacles in the execution of the general plan which had been decided upon in the Council-of-War. Before the arrival of any of the expected troops from the north, young Alexander Hamilton, Washington's aide-de-camp, rode into the Fishkill camp. He had been sent to seek reinforcements for the army in Pennsylvania. It seems that the Commander-in-chief wished to obtain for his own use troops from the Northern Department, including the very men whom Putnam hoped to employ in the movement towards New York. General Dickinson, who was stationed at Elizabethtown Point, had a large enough force, Washington thought, to make an effectual feint in the direction of New York, and so the detachments from the North should be sent on directly to strengthen the main American army in Pennsylvania. Hamilton had been

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\* Minutes of Council of War at Fishkill, Oct. 31, 1777.



authorised to demand the help which Gates, blinded by the glamour of his great victory over Burgoyne, was purposely withholding from Washington. On reaching Putnam's headquarters, young Hamilton ordered the General, in the name of the Commander-in-chief, to forward to Pennsylvania, Poor's and Learned's Continental brigades and Warner's militia brigade, which were already on their way from Albany and would probably reach Fishkill within a few hours. He also directed that other troops, expected from Gates, should immediately on their arrival be dispatched southward, and that a body of New Jersey militia, which was about to cross to Peekskill, should at once march towards Red Bank. Washington's messenger then mounted a fresh horse and sped on towards Albany. He had communicated the orders at Fishkill in a manner which hardly exhibited the patient and tolerant qualities of a wise diplomat. Such summary interference with the plan for the employment of the troops in moving along the lower Hudson, was far from pleasing to the old wolf-killer, who was eager to beard the British in their New York den. The military sins which Putnam forthwith committed, in neglecting to comply with the instructions to part with the reinforcements from the North, were not caused by jealousy—the feeling which Lee had shown towards Washington the year before, —or by the spirit of insubordination like that of Gates in the present campaign. The truth is, that Putnam's military capacity was being put to a severer test than at any previous period of his life. He could not take in, on a large scale, the critical state of affairs at this time. He did not comprehend that Washington must have large reinforcements from the Northern Army to prevent Howe from removing the obstructions on the



Delaware and opening a free communication between Philadelphia and the British shipping. Owing to his limited vision, Putnam magnified the importance of the project against New York and failed to acknowledge the authority of Washington's representative, who, although a young man not yet twenty-one years old, had a clear perception of the military exigencies of the hour.

When Hamilton returned down the Hudson from Albany, where, after much persistence, he had finally obtained Gates's grudging promise to forward the troops indispensable to Washington, he was very indignant to find that Putnam had not done his duty in the Highlands.

"I am pained beyond expression," wrote Hamilton to Washington, on November 10th, from New Windsor, "to inform your Excellency that on my arrival here, I find everything has been neglected and deranged by General Putnam, and that the two brigades, Poor's and Learned's, still remained here and on the other side the river at Fishkill. Colonel Warner's militia, I am told, have been drawn to Peekskill, to aid in an expedition against New York, which, it seems, is at this time the hobby-horse with General Putnam. Not the least attention has been paid to my order, in your name, for a detachment of one thousand men from the troops hitherto stationed at that post. Everything is sacrificed to the whim of taking New York. . . . By Governor Clinton's advice, I have sent an order, in the most emphatical terms, to General Putnam, immediately to despatch all the Continental troops under him to your assistance; and to detain the militia instead of them. . . ."\*

Here is the peremptory order, which, as we learn from the foregoing letter, Hamilton sent to the brave-hearted but wrong-headed Putnam :

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\* *Works of Alexander Hamilton*, ed. by J. C. Hamilton, vol. i.

“HEAD-QUARTERS, NEW WINDSOR,

“9 November, 1777.

“SIR,—I cannot forbear confessing, that I am astonished and alarmed beyond measure, to find that all his Excellency's views have been hitherto frustrated, and that no single step of those I mentioned to you has been taken to afford him the aid he absolutely stands in need of, and by delaying which, the cause of America is put to the utmost conceivable hazard.

“I so fully explained to you the General's situation, that I could not entertain a doubt you would make it the first object of your attention to reënforce him with that speed the exigency of affairs demanded ; but, I am sorry to say, he will have too much reason to think other objects, in comparison with that insignificant, have been uppermost. I speak freely and emphatically, because I tremble at the consequences of the delay that has happened. General Clinton's reënforcement is probably by this time with Mr. Howe. This will give him a decisive superiority over our army. What may be the issue of such a state of things, I leave to the feelings of every friend to his country, capable of foreseeing consequences. My expressions may perhaps have more warmth than is altogether proper ; but they proceed from the overflowing of my heart, in a matter where I conceive this Continent essentially interested. I wrote to you from Albany, and desired you would send a thousand Continental troops of those first proposed to be left with you. This, I understand, has not been done. How the non-compliance can be answered to General Washington, you can best determine.

“I now, Sir, in the most explicit terms, by his Excellency's authority, give it as a positive order from him, that all the Continental troops under your command may be immediately marched to King's Ferry, there to cross the river, and hasten to reënforce the army under him.

“The Massachusetts militia are to be detained instead of them, until the troops coming from the northward arrive. When they do, they will replace, as far as I am instructed, the troops you shall send away in consequence of this requisition. The General's idea of keeping troops this way does not extend farther than covering the country from any little irruptions of

small parties, and carrying on the works necessary for the security of the river. As to attacking New York, that he thinks ought to be out of the question at present. If men could be spared from the other really necessary objects, he would have no objections to attempting a diversion by way of New York, but nothing farther.

"As the times of the Massachusetts and New Hampshire militia will soon expire, it will be proper to call in time for a reënforcement from Connecticut. Governor Clinton will do all in his power, to promote objects in which the State he commands in is so immediately concerned. General Glover's and Patterson's brigades are on their way down. The number of the Continental troops necessary for this post will be furnished out of them.

"I cannot but have the fullest confidence you will use your utmost exertions to execute the business of this letter; and I am with great respect, Sir,

"Your most obedient, ALEXANDER HAMILTON."

On receiving this emphatic message at White Plains, where he was still astride of what Hamilton called the "hobby-horse," the expedition against New York, Putnam sent the letter, which he felt contained "some most unjust and injurious reflections" upon himself, to Washington, to whom he had already written for more direct orders than those which the aide-de-camp had delivered on arriving in the Highlands. Although the New York enterprise was one which the Commander-in-chief had approved of when it was suggested under other circumstances, his reply to Putnam showed that he sanctioned Hamilton's course.

"I cannot but say," wrote Washington to the General, "there has been more delay in the march of the troops, than I think necessary; and I could wish that in future my orders may be complied with without arguing upon the propriety of them."

These words had the effect of unhorsing the veteran Putnam from his hobby, and, without further protest,

he forwarded the needed reinforcements as fast as possible.

After the departure of the troops from Fishkill to join Washington at Whitemarsh, Putnam, with a part of the force that remained, moved down the east side of the Hudson towards Kingsbridge. He reconnoitred in person within three miles of the British post, to see if it would be practicable for a detachment to make a diversion in that direction while General Dickinson with about fourteen hundred men made a descent upon Staten Island. On finding no opportunity to act with effect at Kingsbridge, Putnam led his troops to New Rochelle and arranged for them to cross over to Long Island and attack the forts at Huntington and Setauket. Before the preparations for transportation could be completed, the British learned of the intended incursion and evacuated the forts. The enemy on Staten Island also escaped from General Dickinson.

Other enterprises, planned by Putnam in late November and early December, were more successful. On one occasion he detached several parties, of one hundred men each, to prevent the depredations of numerous bands of marauders sent out from New York by Governor Tryon. The Americans took seventy-five or more prisoners, including Colonel James DeLancey, whose corps, known as the "Cow-Boys," had made free with the cattle of Westchester County. Putnam's scouts also punished the British, for setting fire to the houses of patriotic inhabitants, by burning different residences, one of which belonged to the loyalist General Oliver DeLancey. This method of "justifiable retaliation" put an end, for the time being, to the enemy's incendiary practices.

The second week in December, Putnam, who, with



his men, was still in camp near Long Island Sound, entrusted to the separate command of General Parsons and Colonel Samuel B. Webb, an enterprise on Long Island. Unfortunately, the raid was only partially successful, for, although Parsons's division burned a sloop and a large quantity of boards, and returned with twenty prisoners, Webb's division fell in with the British war-ship *Falcon*, and every man was captured. Putnam was greatly distressed to have his former aide-de-camp thus taken by the enemy. Webb was made a prisoner just at a time when no more enterprises could be undertaken in the region of the Sound, for a letter had come to Putnam from Washington, emphasising the fact that, of greater importance than any attempt to annoy the enemy or to protect the outlying country against incursions, was the necessity of defending the Hudson River and rebuilding the demolished fortifications in the Highlands.

Washington's confidence in Putnam had undergone considerable change since the time that the General was first put in command of the Highlands. He had not been inclined to blame Putnam for the disasters to the forts and posts when the British made their Hudson expedition in October, because, as he himself said at the time, on learning that the enemy had advanced up the river from New York, "the situation of our affairs this way [Philadelphia] has obliged us to draw off so large a part of our force from Peekskill, that what now remains there may perhaps prove inadequate to the defence of it." But later in the season, when Sir Henry Clinton's troops had returned down the Hudson to New York, and it was all important that the American detachments from the Northern Department should be forwarded to Pennsylvania, where things



were in an extremely critical state, the conduct of Putnam, in persistently attempting to carry out his pet project against New York, and in neglecting imperative orders, strengthened a growing conviction in the mind of Washington that the General was hardly the right person for the Highlands. It was essential that the chief commander there should act in harmony with the general plan for the campaign, and not devote his time exclusively to partisan operations. In addition to Hamilton's unfavourable report concerning the General, Washington received numerous complaints from inhabitants of New York, who were greatly dissatisfied with Putnam after the enemy had forced their way up the Hudson River and laid waste its borders. Besides having personal grievances over the destruction of their property, these murmurers found fault with Putnam's pliant good nature in granting applications for passports to New York. He had shown an "over-share of complaisance and indulgence" to Tories, and many of them, under the pretence of urgent business and matters of private concern, had gone into the city and given valuable information to the British general. The fact that Putnam had exchanged newspapers with some of the King's officers, who had been his comrades in the earlier war, was even complained of. There were persons who were ready to distort into an accusation against him so harmless a thing as his facetious note to his old friend General Robertson, when he sent him a packet of papers on one occasion :

"Major General Putnam presents his compliments to Major General Robertson, and sends him some American Newspapers for his perusal—when General Robertson shall have done with them, it is requested they be given to Rivington [James Rivington, the Tory publisher of the *New York Loyal Gazette*] in order that he may print some truth."

The prejudice against Putnam, together with Washington's own misgivings in regard to the General, made a change in the chief command of the Highlands advisable, and yet it was not easy to get a competent officer for the place. Congress, in November, had connected that post with the Northern Department, but Gates, who had been invested with ample authority to carry on the works, would not take charge of the Highlands. He claimed to have more important duties at Albany, but he was really conspiring, as President of the Board of War, to supersede Washington as Commander-in-chief of the American army. General George Clinton, whom Hamilton wished to have appointed to the Highlands, could not be spared from the head of the provincial government of New York. So Putnam was kept awhile longer in chief command of the Highlands, and Washington trusted that the strong words in regard to the necessity of rebuilding the defences of the Hudson would have the desired effect. Before leaving the region of Long Island Sound, Putnam wrote to Washington for permission to visit Connecticut.

"Since I had the Misfortune to Lose Mrs. Putnam," were his words from Saw Pits, dated December 16th, to the Commander-in-chief, who was now with the main army in winter quarters at Valley Forge, "the Circumstances of My Family are Such as Makes it absolutely Necessary—that I Might have a Little time to go home to Settle My Affairs, if you think it not inconsistent with the Service, I shall be glad of your Approbation."

Washington did not deny Putnam's request, but he urged upon him the necessity of going to the Highlands and remaining there until the question was decided whether or not the forts and other works on the Hudson, which had been demolished by the British,

should be restored in their former positions or new places should be selected for that purpose. From a letter of Putnam, dated January 13, 1778, we learn that he, in company with Governor George Clinton, General James Clinton, and several others, among whom was Radière, the French engineer, examined the grounds; and that all except Radière agreed that West Point was the most eligible place to be fortified. It furthermore appears, from the same source, that Radière objected with considerable vehemence, and drew up a memorial designed to show that the site of Fort Clinton possessed advantages much superior to West Point. As the engineer was a man of science, and had the confidence of Congress and Washington, Putnam referred the matter to the Council and Assembly of New York for advice before he made a final decision. A committee, appointed by those bodies, spent three days examining the borders of the Hudson in the Highlands, and they unanimously recommended West Point, agreeing thus with every person authorised to act in the affair except the engineer. Putnam, therefore, selected West Point as the place to be fortified, and ordered Parsons's brigade to break ground there. Engineer Radière, however, was slow in laying out works which he did not approve. This fact, together with extremely cold weather and the privations and sufferings of the men, and the want of teams and other necessary aids, caused considerable delay.

Washington, in great anxiety over the slow progress in building the defences in the Highlands, wrote to Putnam concerning the

“great necessity there is for having the works there finished as soon as possible.” “I most earnestly desire,” he added, “that the strictest attention be paid to every matter, which may con-



VIEW FROM FORT PUTNAM, WEST POINT.





tribute to finishing and putting them in a respectable state before the spring."

In reply, Putnam reported, on February 13th, what had been accomplished :

"At my request the legislature of this [New York] State have appointed a committee, to affix the places and manner of securing the river, and to afford some assistance in expediting the work. The state of affairs now at this post, you will please to observe, is as follows. The chain and necessary anchors are contracted for, to be completed by the first of April ; and, from the intelligence I have received, there is reason to believe they will be finished by that time. Parts of the boom intended to have been used at Fort Montgomery, sufficient for this place, are remaining. Some of the iron is exceedingly bad ; this I hope to have replaced with good iron soon. The *chevaux-de-frise* will be completed by the time the river will admit of sinking them. The batteries near the water, and the fort to cover them, are laid out. The latter is within the walls six hundred yards around, twenty-one feet base, fourteen feet high, the *talus* two inches to the foot. This I fear is too large to be completed by the time expected. Governor Clinton and the committee have agreed to this plan, and nothing on my part shall be wanting to complete it in the best and most expeditious manner. Barracks and huts for about three hundred men are completed, and barracks for about the same number are nearly covered. A road to the river has been made with great difficulty."

The pitiable condition of some of the troops under his command was described by Putnam in the same letter to Washington :

"Meigs's regiment, except those under inoculation with the small-pox, is at the White Plains ; and, until barracks can be fitted up for their reception, I have thought best to continue them there, to cover the country from the incursions of the enemy. Dubois's regiment is unfit to be ordered on duty, there being not one blanket in the regiment. Very few have either a shoe or a shirt, and most of them have neither stockings,

breeches, nor overalls. Several companies of enlisted artificers are in the same situation, and unable to work in the field. Several hundred men are rendered useless, merely for want of necessary apparel, as no clothing is permitted to be stopped at this post. General Parsons has returned to camp some time since, and takes upon himself the command to-morrow [February 14] when I shall set out for Connecticut."

So strongly had the current of public opinion been running against Putnam that many of the leading New York patriots hoped that he would resign or be removed from his position as chief commander in the Highlands.\* This feeling was expressed in a letter to Washington from Chancellor Robert R. Livingston, of New York, who had been a member of the committee of five which drafted the Declaration of Independence :

"Your Excellency is not ignorant of the extent of General Putnam's capacity and diligence ; and how well so ever these may qualify him for this most important command, the prejudices to which his imprudent lenity to the disaffected, and too great intercourse with the enemy, have given rise, have greatly injured his influence. How far the loss of Fort Montgomery and the subsequent ravages of the enemy are to be attributed to him, I will not venture to say ; as this will necessarily be determined by a court of inquiry, whose determinations I would not anticipate. Unfortunately for him, the current of popular opinion in this and the neighbouring States, and as far as I can learn in the troops under his command, runs strongly against him. For my own part, I respect his bravery and former services, and sincerely lament that his patriotism will not suffer him to take that repose, to which his advanced age and past services justly entitle him."

Washington replied to Chancellor Livingston thus, on March 12, 1778, from headquarters, Valley Forge :

"I should have answered your favr. of the 14th January

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\* Thomas Egleston, *Life of Major-General John Paterson*,

before this time, had I not have been daily in hopes that I should have been able to have given you a satisfactory account of a change of men and measures in the North River Department. It has not been an easy matter to find a just pretence for removing an officer from his Command where his misconduct rather appears to result from want of Capacity than from any real intention of doing wrong, and it is therefore as you observe to be lamented that he cannot see his own defects and make an honorable retreat from a Station in which he only exposes his own weakness. Proper measures are taking to carry on the enquiry into the loss of Fort Montgomery agreeable to the direction of Congress, and it is more than probable, from what I have heard, that the issue of that enquiry will afford just grounds for a removal of Genl. P[utnam] but whether it does or not, the prejudices of all ranks in that quarter against him are so great, that he must at all events be prevented from returning. I hope to introduce a gentleman in his place, if the general course of service will admit of it, who will be perfectly agreeable to the State and to the public. In the meantime I trust that Genl. Parsons will do every thing in his power to carry on the works which from his last accounts are in more forwardness than I expected. . . .”

The new commander for the Highlands whom Washington had in mind was Major-General Alexander McDougall. This officer was appointed to that post in March, and was ordered to repair thither at once. He was accompanied from Albany to West Point by Colonel Rufus Putnam, who was to assist Kosciusko, the engineer recently appointed by Congress to take the place of Radière. The work of fortifying was now pushed forward with great vigour. The principal fort was named by General McDougall, Fort Putnam, after Colonel Rufus Putnam, whose own regiment had been employed in building it.\*

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\* Hon. George F. Hoar, in an address delivered on September 17, 1898, at Rutland, Mass., at the dedication of a tablet to

Meanwhile, Washington arranged for the Court of Inquiry which he mentioned in his letter to Chancellor Livingston, and which had been ordered by Congress.

"I should have proceeded immediately upon the business of inquiry," wrote the Commander-in-chief to General McDougall in March, 1778, "had not General Putnam's private affairs required his absence for some little time. I have appointed Brigadier-General Huntington and Colonel Wigglesworth to assist you in this matter; and, enclosed, you will find instructions empowering you, in conjunction with them, to carry on the inquiry agreeable to the resolve of Congress. You will observe by the words of the resolve, that the inquiry is to be made into the loss of Forts Montgomery and Clinton, in the State of New York, and into the conduct of the principal officers commanding those forts.

"Hence the officer commanding in chief in that department will be consequentially involved in the inquiry; because if he has been deficient in affording the proper support to those posts, when called upon to do it, the commandant and principal officers will of course make it appear by the evidence produced in their own justification. I am not certain whether General Putnam has yet returned to Fishkill; and I have therefore by the enclosed, which you will please forward to him by express, given him notice that the inquiry is to be held, and have desired him to repair immediately to that post."

General Rufus Putnam, by the Massachusetts Society, Sons of the American Revolution, said:

"To the genius of Rufus Putnam was due the favourable result at three great turning-points in American history. It was his skill as an engineer that compelled the evacuation of Boston. It was his skill as an engineer that fortified West Point. To him was due the settlement of the Ohio Territory and the adoption of the Ordinance of 1787 which dedicated the Northwest forever to freedom, education and religion, and, in the end, saved the United States from becoming a great slaveholding empire."

For the naming of Fort Putnam, see Boynton's *History of West Point*.





FORT PUTNAM, WEST POINT.





Putnam was already on his return journey to the Highlands, when the message from Washington for him was forwarded to Connecticut. On his arrival at Fishkill he learned for the first time that he had been superseded in the command by General McDougall, and that the officers had been selected to constitute the Court of Inquiry into the causes of the loss of Forts Montgomery and Clinton. The investigations of McDougall, Huntington, and Wigglesworth were made in April, and, although Putnam did not have time to obtain all the "evidences and papers" that he wished to lay before them, the report which they made was very satisfactory to him, for it exonerated him from all blame in the Hudson disaster. The decision, approved by the Continental Congress, was that the forts were lost "not from any fault, misconduct, or negligence of the commanding officers, but solely through the want of adequate force under their command to maintain and defend them." \*

The verdict, favourable to Putnam, was commented upon with much interest by some of the British officers when they heard of it.

"We hear," wrote one of them at Philadelphia "that Mr. Putnam was lately tried before a court-martial and honourably acquitted of all charges brought against him. The principal one was leniency towards prisoners—a sentiment he seems to have imbibed years ago when he had the honour to serve his Majesty for several years in the late [French and Indian] War." †

As soon as the Court of Inquiry finished its investi-

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\* *Journals of Congress*, 1778.

† *Letters of Brunswick and Hessian Officers*. Transl. by W. L. Stone.

gations, Putnam, in accordance with Washington's wish, returned with all possible expedition to Connecticut to superintend the forwarding of recruits for the coming campaign.





## CHAPTER XXIV

### IN THE RECRUITING SERVICE

1778-1779



WHEN Putnam reached Connecticut in April, 1778, he went at once to Lebanon and was furnished by Governor Trumbull with such orders and assistance as he needed for the recruiting service. The response of the people to

Putnam's appeal for new levies was not, at first, what it should have been. A general feeling of over-confidence prevailed, for the "great good news" of the French alliance had recently arrived from across the ocean, and it seemed as if, with this powerful aid pledged to sustain American independence, the British might be easily conquered. "I hope," said Washington in a letter to Putnam, "that the fair, and, I may say *certain*, prospects of success will not induce us to relax." The Connecticut General used every effort to arouse his fellow-colonists to the importance of preparing vigorously for the new campaign, and soon he was able to report to the Commander-in-chief that the people were coming to a realisation of the needs of the hour.

Towards the last of May, Putnam had made so much

progress in raising and forwarding the needed force from Connecticut that he was ready for service elsewhere. Washington was in a quandary how to employ him, and expressed himself thus to Gouverneur Morris of the Continental Congress :

“What am I to do with Putnam? If Congress mean to lay him aside *decently*, I wish they would devise the mode.—He wanted some time ago to visit his family ; I gave him leave, & requested him to superintend the forwarding of the Connecticut recruits.—This service he says is at an end, & is now applying for orders.—If he comes to this army he must be in high command (being next in rank to Lee)—if he goes to the North River he must command Gates, or serve under a junior officer—The sooner these embarrassments could be removed the better. If they are not to be removed, I wish to know it, that I may govern myself accordingly ; indecision & suspense in the military line, are hurtful in the extreme.”

Gates had succeeded McDougall in the command of the Hudson Highlands ; and Lee, who had recently been exchanged, had returned to his old place as Senior Major-General in the Continental army. After Washington wrote the letter in which he mentioned both these Generals in connection with Putnam, several weeks passed away before Congress did anything to solve the problem concerning the Connecticut veteran. Several important events which occurred in the early summer had a bearing upon the military duty which was at length assigned to Putnam. The British troops, under the chief command of Sir Henry Clinton, the successor of General William Howe, became so alarmed by the approach of a powerful French fleet that they evacuated Philadelphia on June 18th. In the pursuit of the enemy, Washington fought a battle, June 28th, at Monmouth. The British were driven



from the field, but the force of the blow aimed at them was broken by the misconduct of Lee. For his disobedience of orders and his unnecessary and shameful retreat, Lee was put under arrest to be tried by court-martial. Putnam was now summoned to take the command of troops in need of an officer of high rank. Congress had at last accepted the report of the Court of Inquiry and restored him to his old standing in the army. Before this final decision was reached, the General had sent by the hand of his son, Israel, a most urgent letter to Congress. It was dictated at Hartford in June.

“I have waited with the utmost impatience for orders,” he said, “but none having arrived . . . I think there must be some mistake . . . I must beg that the Hon’ble Congress will take this matter into their consideration, and grant that I may be acquitted and that with Honor or tried by a Genl. Court Martial . . . so that My Character Might stand in a clearer light in the World ; but to be posted here as a publick spectator for every ill Minded person to make their remarks upon, I think is very poor encouragement for any person to venture their lives and fortunes in the Service.”

On receiving the welcome order to rejoin the main army, Putnam left Connecticut immediately for White Plains, to which place Washington, with the Connecticut regiments, had moved from Monmouth. The American force near Chatterton Hill and the old battle-ground of 1776 presented a powerful front, this being the largest number of troops brought together in a single encampment during the war. Putnam, on his arrival, was assigned to the command of the Virginia “Line,” consisting of the brigades of Woodford, Muhlenberg, and Scott ; and he soon received orders to cross the Hudson, with his wing of the army, for the

security of West Point. Dr. James Thacher, the American surgeon at the Beverly Robinson House, which had been converted into a hospital, met Putnam in the Highlands and noted down in his *Military Journal*, under date of September 8th, his impressions of the General :

“Major-General Putnam has arrived in this vicinity, with the division of the Virginia and Maryland troops under his command, and they have encamped on the borders of the river. Brigadiers Woodford and Muhlenberg have taken up quarters in apartments in our hospital. This is my first interview with this celebrated hero [Putnam]. In his person he is corpulent and clumsy, but carries a bold, undaunted front. He exhibits little of the refinements of the well-educated gentleman, but much of the character of the veteran soldier. He appears to be advanced to the age of about sixty years, and it is famed of him that he has, in many instances, proved himself as brave as Cæsar. He visited our hospital, and inquired with much solicitude into the condition of our patients ; observing a considerable number of men who were infected with the ground itch, generated by lying on the ground, he inquired why they were not cured. I answered, ‘because we have no hog’s lard to make ointment.’ ‘Did you never,’ said the General, ‘cure the itch with tar and brimstone?’ ‘No, Sir.’ ‘Then,’ replied he good humoredly, ‘you are not fit for a doctor.’ ”

The arrangement, whereby Putnam was again in the Highlands to watch the defences of the Hudson, was only a temporary one, for Washington knew that it would not be wise to keep the General, who had been severely criticised in the preceding campaign, long in the chief command there. “This State [New York] I am authorised to say,” wrote Washington to Gates in September, “dislike General Putnam, and not reposing confidence in him, they will be uneasy if he should be

left to command." At the time that these words were penned, the main Continental Army had marched from White Plains and was stationed in four divisions at different places. The brigades of Putnam, near West Point, constituted the first division; Baron de Kalb was in command of the second division at Fishkill Plains; a third division was with Lord Stirling in the vicinity of Fredericksburg; and the fourth division, composed of the whole left wing of the army, was under Gates at Danbury.

"These several posts appear to be the best we can occupy in the present doubtful state of things," said Washington in a letter from his headquarters at Fredericksburg to Congress, "as they have relation to the support of West Point, in case of an attack in that quarter, and are also on the communication to the eastward if the enemy point their operations that way. Besides these dispositions, Gen'l Scott, with a light corps, remains below in the County about King's Street."

It became evident before long that the main object of the British for the remainder of the campaign of 1778, was to strengthen their possession of New York. Putnam was alert to repel any sally of the enemy from the city. He was successful in driving back several detachments which were sent out against him at different times. One of the hostile incursions he reported to Washington in a letter written by his own hand. It is full of curiously misspelled words:

"PICKSKILL, y<sup>e</sup> 24 Sep<sup>r</sup> 1778.

"DEAR GINROL,—Larst night I received a Leator [letter] from Collo Spencor informing me that the Enimy had Landed at the English Naborwhod [neighbourhood] and ware on thar March to hackensack. I immedat called the ginrol ofesors together to consult what was beast to be don it was concluded to Exammin the mens gons and Cartridges & & and to have them ready

for a March at the shortest notis when it shuld be thought beast or on receaving your Orders. I waited som tim for further Intelleganc but hearing non I rod down to Kings fary and on my way met 4 men with thar horses loded with bagig going back into the contry which said thay cam from within 2 milds [miles] of tarytown who said the Enemy had com out of New York in 3 larg Colloms won [one] by the way of Maranack and won by taritown and won had gon into the jarsys [Jerseys] Just as I had got to the farry I meat won Cap<sup>t</sup> Jonston with a leator from Collo hay [Col. Hay] which informed me that the Enemy had got as fur as Sovalingboro church and was incamped thare and it was said thay war [were] waiteng for a wind to bring up the ships: the Enemy are colecting all the catel sheap and hogs thay can in this setuation shuld be glad of your Excelanceys ordors what to do

“I am Sir with the gratest Estem

“your humbel Sarveant

“ISRAEL PUTNAM.”

When the cold weather of late autumn began, the British settled into comfortable quarters in New York, and the Americans in the Highlands feeling less danger of being attacked, indulged in occasional festivities. Surgeon Thatcher tells of “an entertainment, by invitation of Brigadier-General Muhlenberg, who occupies a room in our hospital [Robinson House].”

“The guests consisted of forty-one respectable officers, and our tables were furnished with fourteen different dishes, arranged in fashionable style. After dinner, Major-General Putnam was requested to preside, and displayed no less urbanity at the head of the table than bravery at the head of his division. A number of toasts were pronounced, accompanied with humorous and merry songs. In the evening we were cheered with military music and dancing, which continued till a late hour in the night.”

Towards the last of November, Washington completed arrangements for the disposition of the Con-



tinental Army for the winter. Most of the brigades were to be in the Highlands. Three brigades, composed of the New Hampshire and Connecticut troops and Hazen's regiment were to be posted in the vicinity of Danbury, Connecticut, "for the protection of the country lying along the Sound, to cover our magazines lying on the Connecticut River, and to aid the Highlands on any serious movement of the enemy that way." Putnam was to command at Danbury, McDougall in the Highlands, and Washington's own headquarters were to be at Middlebrook in New Jersey. Soon after the announcement that he was transferred to the Eastern Division, Putnam set out for Connecticut to take command of the troops over whom he had been appointed. Meanwhile McDougall returned to the Highlands, to be again in chief charge of the Hudson defences.

A three-days' journey brought Putnam, about December 1st, to the winter camps in the sheltered valley, formed by the Saugatuck and its tributaries, which lie along the border line of what was then Danbury (now Bethel) and Redding. He established his headquarters in a farmhouse on Umpawaug Hill. Besides his sons Israel and Daniel, the General had in his "military family" the new aide-de-camp, appointed December 18, 1778. This was David Humphreys, who had been Brigade-Major in Parsons's Brigade and who, after serving on Putnam's staff, became aide successively to Greene and Washington, a military career which, when the war was ended, this young officer (born 1753, in Derby, Connecticut) recited in verse, thus :

"With what high Chiefs I play'd my early part,  
With Parsons first, whose eye, with piercing ken,



Reads through the hearts the characters of men ;  
Then how I aided, in the foll'wing scene,  
Death-daring Putnam—then immortal Greene—  
Then how great Washington my youth approv'd,  
In rank preferred, and as a parent lov'd."

Another writer of patriotic and martial lines was a visitor at Putnam's headquarters—Joel Barlow, a native of Redding and graduate of Yale College, who, in his *Columbiad*, mentions among American heroes,

" Putnam, scored with ancient scars,  
The living records of his country's wars."

The same versifier of Revolutionary time commemorated the General's brave efforts to rally the men at Bunker Hill, in this stirring stanza :

" There strides bold Putnam, and from all the plains  
Calls the third host, the tardy rear sustains,  
And, 'mid the whizzing deaths that fill the air,  
Waves back his sword, and dares the foll'wing war."

The comparative leisure of camp life at Redding gave some of the soldiers abundant opportunities to brood over their privations, and they succeeded in spreading discontent until a large number were ready to revolt, claiming that they had been suffering from want of clothes and blankets, that their pay was nothing, and that all engagements with them should be made good. On December 30th, the men of Huntington's brigade assembled under arms, determined to march to Hartford and demand of the Legislature redress of grievances. Putnam's tactful course in dealing with the mutinous men—how he addressed them kindly and firmly and caused them to disperse quietly to their tents—is related by Humphreys, who was on the scene :



MAIN ENTRANCE TO PUTNAM MEMORIAL PARK, REDDING, CONN.



“Word having been brought to General Putnam that the second brigade was under arms, he mounted his horse, galloped to the cantonment, and thus addressed them: ‘My brave lads, whither are you going? Do you intend to desert your officers, and to invite the enemy to follow you into the country? Whose cause have you been fighting and suffering so long in—is it not your own? Have you no property, no parents, wives, or children? You have behaved like men so far—all the world is full of your praises—and posterity will stand astonished at your deeds, but not if you spoil all at last. Don’t you consider how much the country is distressed by the war, and that your officers have not been any better paid than yourselves? But we all expect better times, and that the country will do us ample justice. Let us all stand by one another, then, and fight it out like brave soldiers. Think what a shame it would be for Connecticut men to run away from their officers.’

“After the several regiments had received the General as he rode along the line, with drums beating and presented arms, the sergeants, who had then the command, brought the men to an order, in which position they continued while he was speaking. When he had done, he directed the acting Major of Brigade to give the word for them to shoulder, march to their regimental parades, and lodge arms; all which they executed with promptitude and apparent good humour. One soldier only, who had been the most active, was confined in the quarter-guard; from whence, at night, he attempted to make his escape. But the sentinel, who had also been in the mutiny, shot him dead on the spot, and thus the affair subsided.”

When Washington heard of the mutiny, he wrote to Putnam, commending him for his success in quelling it.\*

Although the troops as a whole remained quiet during the winter, several soldiers deserted, in order to become spies for the enemy. Such men were summarily dealt with, when they were caught. Edward Jones and John Smith were put to death on the same day. There are

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\* Official documents relating to the mutiny are among the Trumbull MSS.

different versions of the execution, which took place on "Gallows Hill," near the Redding camp. It has been claimed that much inhumanity was shown toward the condemned deserters, but, according to several contemporaneous accounts, the two men were not brutally treated. Probably the most correct description of the execution is by James Olmstead, who had a good opportunity of learning the truth from his father, an eye-witness :

"My father, being an officer himself and well known to some of the officers on duty, was one of the few who were admitted within the enclosure formed by the troops around the place of execution, and able to witness all that there took place. After prayer by the Rev. Mr. Bartlett, the younger prisoner, Smith, was first brought forward to his doom. After he had been placed in position and his death warrant read, a file of soldiers was drawn up in a line with loaded muskets and the word of command given. The firing was simultaneous and he fell dead on the spot. After the smoke had cleared away it was found that his outer garment, a sort of frock or blouse, had been set on fire by the discharge, and it was extinguished by a soldier who had fired. He was within a few feet of the scaffold when Jones, pale and haggard, was next brought on, his death warrant was read and he seemed to recognise some few of his old friends, but said very little except to bid farewell to all, and his last words were, 'God knows I'm not guilty,' and he was hurried into eternity.

"My father had a pretty good general knowledge of General Putnam and his eccentricities, and had there been any unnecessary hardships or severity used in the treatment of the prisoners, he most certainly must have seen and known something of it, but in all I ever heard from him or any one else, no allusion was made to anything of the kind, and in view of all the circumstances I think it may be safe to infer that no such thing occurred on that occasion." \*

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\* From a letter originally published in the *Danbury* (Conn.) *News*.





A RESTORED CABIN IN PUTNAM MEMORIAL PARK, REDDING, CONN.



Over against this tragic event at Redding may be placed two anecdotes relating to Putnam.

The first, which "presents the General in a very amiable light," is narrated by an old-time minister, Rev. Thomas F. Davies, in an historical sermon preached in 1839 at Green's Farms, Connecticut :

"A poor man with a family needing support, and who lived in the neighbouring town of Ridgefield, was told by one acquainted with his wants that if he would visit General Putnam [at Redding] and hold a conversation with him, he would on his return and on proof of the fact give him a bushel of wheat. The temptation in that time of scarcity and taxes was great, and so also was the fear of intruding upon so distinguished an individual ; but the stern necessities of his condition at length induced the poor man to venture. He accordingly presented himself at headquarters and requested the servant to solicit for him an interview with the General. Putnam promptly summoned the man into his presence, directed him to be seated, and listened with interest while the man with great trepidation gave the statement which accounted for the liberty he had taken. The General directed the servant to bring some wine, conversed for a time very pleasantly with his needy visitor, and then, calling for pen and ink, wrote a certificate in which he gave the name of the individual, and stated that he had visited and conversed with General Putnam, who signed it in his official character. Thus furnished with the means of giving bread to his family, the distressed individual returned to his humble roof ; and this anecdote, which I have on the very best authority, is proof that Putnam was not destitute of those kind and gentle affections which are so desirable an ornament of the most heroic character."

The other anecdote is told by Charles B. Todd, in his *History of Redding*. Among the soldiers in camp was Tom Warrups, an Indian, who was one of Putnam's most valued scouts.

"Tom had a weakness for liquor, which would have caused his expulsion from the camp had it not been for his services as scout and guide. One day he was seen deplorably drunk, and the officer of the day in disgust ordered him to be ridden out of the camp. A stout rail was brought, Tom was placed astride of it, four men hoisted it upon their shoulders, and the cavalcade started. On their way they met General Putnam with his aids making the rounds of the camp.

" 'Tom,' said the General, sternly, 'how 's this? Are n't you ashamed to be seen riding out of camp in this way?'

" 'Yes,' replied Tom with drunken gravity, 'Tom is ashamed, vera mooch ashamed, to see poor Indian ride and the General he go afoot.' "

During the winter, the British made marauding expeditions from New York into Connecticut, and Putnam found it necessary to send out detachments from the Redding camp to watch the enemy. In the latter part of February, 1779, he himself was at Horseneck on a tour of supervision of the outposts. Here occurred his famous ride. It appears, from the British contemporary account in Rivington's *New York Gazette*, March 3, 1779, that at eleven o'clock on Thursday night, February 25th, Governor Tryon left Kingsbridge with a force of about fifteen hundred men, consisting of the 17th, 44th, and 57th British regiments, one of the Hessians and two of new levies, for an incursion into Connecticut to that part of Greenwich which extended into the Sound and which received its name from having been used for a pasture for horses. He intended to surprise the American outpost there and destroy the salt-works in the vicinity, which supplied an urgent need of the Continentals. The approach of the hostile troops was discovered by Captain Titus Hosmer and his men, who were on picket duty at some distance

from Horseneck. We have Putnam's own account\* of their brave attempt to retard the British:

"A captain and thirty men were sent from our advanced lines from Horseneck who discovered the enemy at New Rochelle, in advance. They retired before them undiscovered as far as Rye Neck, where, it growing light, the enemy observed and attacked them. They defended themselves as well as possible and made their way good to Sawpitts, where they took advantage of a commanding piece of ground and made some little stand, but the superior force of the enemy obliged them to retire over Byram bridge, which they took up, and by that means had an opportunity of reaching Horseneck in safety."

Arriving at Horseneck at full gallop, Captain Hosmer and his riders had just time to alarm the camp when Tryon and his marauders appeared in sight, about nine o'clock on Friday morning, February 26th. Traditions differ as to just where Putnam was at this hour. According to one account, he was staying with General Ebenezer Mead, a member of the Committee of Safety, and was in the front chamber, shaving. Suddenly he saw in the mirror, before which he was standing, a reflection of the red-coats advancing from the west. Half-shaven and with the lather still on his face, he grasped his sword, rushed out of the house, mounted his horse and started at high speed for the hill, half a mile distant, to rally his troops.† Another

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\* *Connecticut Historical Collections*, by J. W. Barber, pp. 381-382.

† This hill, on which the Congregational meeting-house stood, was not the one down which Putnam made his famous ride. That hill was near the Episcopal Church. Some writers have become confused by not making this distinction in describing the place of the exploit.



tradition says that Putnam was at the house of Captain John Hobby, which was located much nearer the hill, and that when the enemy approached, walking their horses, they saw Putnam with his coat on his arm, spring on his horse and gallop towards his men. The prevailing current of authority seems to indicate that Putnam was at the tavern kept by Israel Knapp, afterwards known as the Tracy place, and which was situated a short distance west of the brow of the precipice at Horseneck. But wherever the General was alarmed that morning, he was soon with his men on the hill where the Congregational meeting-house stood, and made rapid preparations to resist the British. It is most interesting to have his official report, dated March 2, 1779, to Governor Trumbull, giving certain details of the affair :

“As I was there myself,” says Putnam, “to see the situation of the guards, I had the troops formed on a hill by the [Congregational] meeting-house, ready to receive the enemy as they advanced.”

The Americans numbered about one hundred and fifty—a force only one-tenth of the number under Tryon. Putnam continues by describing the approach of the hostile troops :

“They came on briskly, and I soon discovered that their design was to turn our flanks and possess themselves of a defile in our rear, which would effectually prevent our retreat. I therefore ordered parties out on both flanks, with directions to give me information of their approach, that we might retire in season. In the meantime a column advanced up the main road, where the remainder of the troops (amounting to only about sixty) were posted.”

On came the soldiers of King George ; dragoons and infantry ready to charge. In the van were some of the most vindictive foes,—Delancey's corps of Tories.

"We discharged some old field pieces," says Putnam, "which were there, a few times, and gave them a small fire of musketry, but without any considerable effect; the superior force of the enemy soon obliged our small detachment to abandon the place. I therefore directed the troops to retire and form on a hill a little distance from Horseneck, while I proceeded to Stamford and collected a body of militia and a few Continental troops which were there, with which I returned immediately."

But Putnam omits to mention what happened just after he had ordered his men to retreat a short distance across a swamp to a place inaccessible to horses, while he himself went for reinforcements. When he wheeled his horse into the main road towards Stamford, several British dragoons started to pursue him. He saw them coming. Over the frozen highway sped the General. The ring of steel-shod hoofs behind him told him how fast the enemy's chargers were gaining upon him. Onward the old hero spurred, while the flying horsemen lessened the distance between themselves and their prize. A fourth of a mile was passed in the mad chase, and then the road curved sharply toward the north and led round a steep declivity. Out from the highway the intrepid Putnam leaped his steed and dashed straight on towards the precipice and forced his horse over the brow and down the rocky height. His pursuers—one of them had just been within two lengths of him on the road—reined in their horses in utter astonishment at sight of the General's reckless feat, and, not daring to follow him down the dangerous steep, fired their revolvers at him as he went. An eye-witness of the exploit used

to tell how Putnam waved back his sword with taunting words to the baffled British, whose balls whizzed past him. One of the bullets pierced his military cap.

Traditions differ as to just the course which the hero took in his descent. One is that he went down the entire length of an irregular rocky stair-way, formed by seventy or more rough stones, so arranged as to make a convenient approach from the plain below to the Episcopal Church, which stood near the crest of the Horseneck height. The other version says that Putnam followed a cow-path diagonally across the hill and when he reached the stone steps he was two-thirds from the top. In either case, he reached the foot at the spot which is pointed out to-day. The hill, now called Putnam's or Put's Hill, has been cut through since Revolutionary days, and a causeway has been made at its base across the plain or meadow. When Lafayette, with whom Putnam probably became acquainted at White Plains in the autumn of 1778, visited the United States in 1824-25, he stopped at Greenwich on his tour through Connecticut. He was met by a large gathering of people, who accompanied him to the scene of Putnam's adventure, where an arch had been erected for the occasion. Lafayette left his carriage and walked down the hill, telling the members of the reception committee his great interest in the characteristic exploit of the General.

The centennial commemoration of the renowned ride was observed with appropriate exercises at Greenwich in February, 1879. A granite boulder monument, bearing a tablet and inscription, was placed in 1900 on the historic hill to mark the locality of Putnam's remarkable feat. This memorial emphasises with vivid reality that although, on the one hand, the exploit has



PUTNAM'S HILL, GREENWICH, CONN. SCENE OF ISRAEL PUTNAM'S RIDE.





been disputed by some writers of Revolutionary events, and, on the other hand, has been romantically exaggerated in story-books and in numberless quaint drawings, paintings, and prints,—still Putnam's ride is well authenticated and can continue to be a favourite tale concerning the intrepid hero.\*

On that eventful day in Putnam's career, it appears that, in a farm-house situated about half a mile below the hill, a mother, busy over her milk-pans, heard the rapid beat of horse-hoofs coming down the road which led past the house. She rushed to the door to look for her four little girls, who had been playing outside and who might be in danger of being trampled upon. The hatless General, his long hair blowing about his round, kindly face, dashed up in front of the house and drew up his horse so suddenly as to pull him back on his haunches. "For God's sake, take your children in," Putnam called to the mother. "The British are upon us." After this momentary halt—an act of thoughtfulness, like that of a personal friend, to warn the mother to find a hiding-place for her family,—the General put spurs to his horse and sped on towards Stamford. When Putnam returned to Horseneck with a reinforcement, which he obtained at Stamford, he found the enemy gone. They had destroyed the salt works as well as a sloop and store at Coscob, and had pillaged many of the houses in Greenwich.

"The officer commanding the Continental troops stationed at Horseneck," writes Putnam, referring to Colonel Holdridge,

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\* See Historical Address by Col. H. W. R. Hoyt, delivered February 22, 1879, at Greenwich, Conn.; D. M. Mead's *History of Greenwich, Conn.*, pp. 163-170; B. J. Lossing's *Pictorial Field-Book of the American Revolution*, vol. i., pp. 411-413; and *The Outlook*, vol. lxxv., pp. 620-622.

whom he had ordered to retreat a short distance with the men that morning, while he himself rode to Stamford for help, "mistook my orders and went much farther than I intended, so that he could not come up with them [the British] to any advantage. I, however, ordered the few troops that came from Stamford to pursue them, thinking they might have an opportunity to pick up some stragglers. In this I was not mistaken, as your Excellency [Governor Trumbull] will see by the list of prisoners. Besides these, eight or nine more were taken and sent off, so that I cannot tell to which particular regiments they belonged; one ammunition and one baggage waggon were taken. In the former there were about two hundred rounds of canister, grape, and round shot, suited to three-pounders, some slow matches, and about two hundred tubes; the latter was filled with plunder, which I had the satisfaction of restoring to the inhabitants from whom it was taken. As I have not yet got a return, I cannot tell exactly the number we lost, though I don't think more than ten soldiers and about that number of inhabitants, but a few of which were in arms.

"List of prisoners taken at Horseneck the 26th [February]: 17th Regiment, 15 privates; 44th do., 5 privates; 57th do., 3 privates; Loyal American Regiment, 5; Emmerick's corps, 8; First Battalion of Artillery, 1; Pioneers, 1—Total 38. N.B. Seven deserters from Emmerick's corps."

In appreciation of Putnam's kind treatment of the wounded prisoners, who were soon afterwards exchanged, and also in recognition of his bravery in making the perilous descent at Horseneck, Governor Tryon is said to have sent the General the present of a new suit of military clothes, including a chapeau to replace the cap which was pierced by the British bullet.

During March, 1779, Putnam continued on guard with the troops in Connecticut and was more or less successful in thwarting the attempts of the British to commit depredations on the towns along the coast of Long Island Sound. When the time drew near for the



GENERAL ISRAEL PUTNAM'S SADDLE.



opening of the new campaign, he issued orders at Redding camp on April 11th to his officers and men that they "lose no time in Preparing for the field, that they may be ready to leave their present Quarters at the Shortest Notice." A few days later, the General made a trip eastward. He appeared before the General Assembly of Connecticut, and urged that legislative body to furnish additional troops for the brigades under his command. On his return to Redding, he wrote to Colonel Jeremiah Wadsworth, at whose house at Hartford he had recently spent a night. The holograph letter is now owned by the Connecticut Historical Society. To attempt to read this original production is like working at a conundrum :

"READING y<sup>e</sup> 11 of May 1779

"DEAR SIR,—on my arival to this Plas [place] I could hear nothing of my hard mony and so must conclud it is gon to the dogs we have no nus [news] hear [here] from hoad-Quartors not alin [a line] senc I cam hear and what my destination is to be this Summor cant even so much as Geuss [guess] but shuld be much abliged to you if you would be so good as to send me by the teems the Lym [lime] juice you was so good as to offor me and a par [pair] of shoos [shoes] I left undor the chambor tabel: I begin to think the nues [news] from the sutherd [southward] is tru of ginrol Lintons [General Benjamin Lincoln] having a batel [battle] and comming off[f] [In] the leator it is said he killed 200 hundred and took 500 hundred what maks me creudit it is becaus the accounts in the New York papors exactly agree with ours.\*

\* It is uncertain just what engagement in the South, Putnam refers to in this letter. In any case the report of American success proved to be exaggerated, for although General Lincoln managed to keep the British troops below the Savannah River for a time, he and the largest part of his army were made prisoners at Charleston, S. C., by the enemy's force under Sir Henry Clinton.



"My beast Respects to your Lady and sistors and Letel soon [little son]

"I am dear sir with the greatest respects

"Your most obed [ient] and humbel Sarvant

"ISRAEL PUTNAM."

Putnam, who was so desirous to know where he was to serve in the campaign, was, a few days later, assigned to the important command of the right wing of the army, on the west side of the Hudson, headquarters at Smith's Clove. It included the Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania divisions. On receiving news of his appointment, the General made arrangements to go immediately to his new post. Just before he left Redding, he issued, on May 27th, this farewell order :

"Maj-General Putnam being about to take command of one of the Wings of the Grand Army, before he leaves the Troops who have served under him the winter past, thinks it his Duty to Signify to them his entire approbation of their Regular and Soldier like Conduct, and wishes them (wherever they may happen to be out) a Successful and Glorious Campaign." \*

Soon after Putnam's departure from Redding, all the Connecticut troops in camp there were marched to the Highlands, by way of Ridgefield, Bedford, and Fishkill, to serve on the east side of the Hudson in the Continental force under Major-General Heath.

The site of the camp of the soldiers whom Putnam commanded at Redding in the winter of 1778-79, is now marked by Putnam Memorial Park, in which a monument has been erected by the State of Connecticut to the memory of the men who were stationed there. Block-houses and log-cabins, in imitation of the

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\* *Record of Connecticut Men During the Revolution*, Adjutant-General's Office, Hartford.



PUTNAM MEMORIAL PARK, REDDING, CONN. MONUMENT AND FIRE-PLACES.



ancient camp, have also been built, while of special and pathetic interest in the park is the long double line of stones in heaps which were the fire-places in the rude huts of the soldiers.

Important events in the campaign of 1779 occurred about the time of Putnam's arrival at Smith's Clove. On May 31st, the British advanced up the Hudson and captured Stony Point and, on the next day, they compelled the surrender of Fort Lafayette, which stood on the opposite shore at Verplanck's Point. It was evident to the Americans that the possession of these posts by the British was the beginning of hostile operations against West Point. Washington realised the necessity of being situated where he could, at the best advantage, attend to different parts of the army on both sides of the Hudson River. He accordingly established his headquarters at New Windsor, on June 23rd, leaving Putnam in immediate charge of the main body of troops, which had marched from Middlebrook to Smith's Clove. McDougall commanded at West Point. On the east side of the Hudson were the brigades under Heath, namely—Nixon's at Constitution Island, Parsons's opposite to West Point, and Huntington's on the principal road leading to Fishkill.

The British, instead of advancing farther up the river after Stony Point and Fort Lafayette had fallen into their hands, devoted their attention to a series of marauding expeditions along the coast. Connecticut suffered especially from the cruel incursions. Washington was quick to fathom the purpose of the enemy, who hoped by diversions to induce him to send away a part of his force from the Highlands and thus expose West Point to an attack. In order to relieve Connecticut from British ravages and to strengthen his own

position on the Hudson, Washington planned no less daring a stroke than an attempt to recover Stony Point. He entrusted the enterprise to Anthony Wayne; and, at midnight of July 15th, that bold officer, with a detachment of twelve hundred light infantry, surprised and captured the stronghold in a brilliant assault, which won praises even from the enemy. Immediately after the victory the works were demolished and the garrison, with the cannon and stores, were removed, Washington not thinking it prudent to retain the fortress. The object in storming Stony Point was accomplished, for the British left Connecticut. Their progress up the river to re-occupy their old position was impeded as much as possible by the Americans; and now again we find Putnam actively engaged in a kind of military duty that was much to his liking. Notwithstanding the brave General's attempts to drive back the British, the enemy succeeded in regaining possession of Stony and Verplanck's Points. The American troops were then concentrated about West Point. Washington established his headquarters there and urged forward the construction of the works which had been begun. Putnam, who was stationed at Buttermilk Falls, two miles below West Point, retained the immediate command of the right wing of the army.

"He was happy," writes Humphreys in his reminiscences of the General, "in possessing the friendship of the officers of that line, and in living on terms of hospitality with them. Indeed, there was no family in the army that lived better than his own. The General, his second son, Major Daniel Putnam, and the writer of these memoirs composed that family."

There was little change in the general situation of



affairs on the Hudson or around New York until about October 21st, when the enemy destroyed and abandoned their defences at Stony and Verplanck's Points. This movement was preliminary to the departure of Sir Henry Clinton from New York to attempt the capture of Charleston, S. C. As soon as the Hudson was thus free from British restraint, the Americans moved down the river and took possession of King's Ferry. So urgent was the need of troops in South Carolina that Washington detached from his army all the Virginia and North Carolina regiments and sent them South to aid in resisting the British. In November he completed preparations for wintering in New Jersey the troops that remained in the North. Putnam, who was to be with the Commander-in-chief at headquarters at Morristown, was given leave of absence in November for a brief visit home. He was accompanied to Connecticut by his son Daniel and Aide-de-camp Humphreys. How little the General realised that his military career was ended !





## CHAPTER XXV

### LAST YEARS

1779-1790



ON December, 1779, after nearly a fortnight's visit at home, Putnam set out on horseback to rejoin the army, which had gone into winter quarters at Morristown, N. J. On the road between Pomfret and Hartford, he felt, says Humphreys, "an unusual torpor slowly pervading his right hand and foot." The strange heavy sensation crept gradually on until, by the time that Putnam reached the house of his friend, Colonel Jeremiah Wadsworth at Hartford, his entire right side was affected. The General could not believe that his ailment was paralysis, and so, after a brief rest, he tried to shake off the numb feeling by exercise. The disease, however, was upon him, and he soon found that he must give up the thought of proceeding on his way. As is often the case with men of high emotion, he was thrown by his disappointment into a state of temporary dejection, but on reaching home, where he was taken as soon as practicable, he recovered, after a little time, his usual cheerfulness.

He passed a comfortable winter in the care of his

affectionate sons and daughters. Mehitable, Mary, and Eunice—respectively Mrs. Daniel Tyler, Mrs. Zachariah Waldo, and Mrs. Elisha Avery (afterwards Mrs. Lemuel Grosvenor)—were living in Pomfret and went to see their father as often as possible at the old homestead, where he made his home with the family of his eldest son. Both Israel, Jr., and Daniel spent the winter in Pomfret.

Four months after the hero was “laid up in ordinary,” he received a visit from David Humphreys, who, being greatly attached to the General, wished to see him again before returning to the army. In a *Letter to a Young Lady in Boston*, written at New Haven, in 1780, Putnam’s former aide-de-camp describes in verse his journey from the Massachusetts capital to Pomfret, and his brief sojourn with the General :

“ The sun, to our New World now present,  
Brought in the day benign and pleasant ;  
The day, by milder fates attended,  
Our plagues at Gen’ral Putnam’s ended.  
That chief, though ill, received our party  
With joy, and gave us welcome hearty ;  
The good old man, of death not fearful,  
Retained his mind and temper cheerful ;  
Retain’d (with palsy sorely smitten)  
His love of country, pique for Britain ;  
He told of many a deed and skirmish,  
That basis for romance might furnish ;  
The stories of his wars and woes,  
Which I shall write in humble prose,  
Should Heaven (that fondest schemes can mar)  
Protract my life beyond this war.”

It was not until eight years after these lines were penned that Humphreys accomplished his plan for the biography of Putnam.

When Humphreys returned to the army at the beginning of the new campaign of 1780, to serve as Washington's aide-de-camp, he carried with him a letter of hopeful tone from Putnam to the Commander-in-chief. It read as follows :

“ POMFRET, 29 May, 1780.

“ DEAR SIR,—I cannot forbear informing your Excellency, by the return of Major Humphreys to camp, of the state of my health from the first of my illness to the present time. After I was prevented from coming on to the army by a stroke of the paralytic kind, which deprived me, in a great measure, of the use of my right leg and arm, I retired to my plantation and have been gradually growing better ever since. I have now so far gained the use of my limbs, especially of my leg, as to be able to walk with very little impediment, and to ride on horseback tolerably well. In other respects I am in perfect health, and enjoy the comforts and pleasures of life with as good a relish as most of my neighbours.

“ Although I should not be able to resume a command in the army, I propose to myself the happiness of making a visit, and seeing my friends there some time in the course of the campaign. And, however incapable I may be of serving my country, to my latest hour my wishes and prayers will always be most ardent and sincere for its happiness and freedom. As a principal instrument in the hand of Providence for effecting this, may Heaven long preserve your Excellency's most important and valuable life.

“ Not being able to hold the pen in my own hand, I am obliged to make use of another to express with how much regard and esteem, I am, your Excellency's

“ Most obedient and very humble servant,

“ ISRAEL PUTNAM.

“ P. S. I am making a great effort to use my hand to make the initials of my name for the first time.

“ I. P.”

Washington replied :

"HEAD-QUARTERS, 5 July, 1780.

"DEAR SIR,—I am very happy to learn from your letter of the 29th [of May] handed me by Major Humphreys, that the present state of your health is so flattering, and that it promises you the prospect of being in a condition to make a visit to your old associates some time this campaign. I wish it were in my power to congratulate you on a complete recovery. I should feel a sincere satisfaction in such an event, and I hope for it heartily, with the rest of your friends in this quarter.

"I am, dear Sir, &c.,

"G. WASHINGTON."

Putnam was not to be disappointed in his earnest desire to visit the army. We find him at Tappan in the autumn of 1780. "General Putnam is here," wrote General Greene in closing a letter to his wife from that place in September, "talking as usual, and telling his old stories, which prevents my writing more. The old gentleman, notwithstanding the late paralytical shock, is very cheerful and social." \*

Putnam was in the camp at the time of the discovery of the dark plot of Benedict Arnold to betray West Point into the hands of the enemy, and he shared in all the excited indignation occasioned by that base treason. With keen interest, after his return home, the General awaited tidings of the progress of military affairs, and no patriot rejoiced more than he over the victory that finally crowned the American arms. When peace was made and independence firmly established, Putnam wrote to Washington, congratulating him on the splendid success of the cause which had been so dear to both their hearts. The letter which came in reply the

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\* G. W. Greene, *Life of Major-General Nathanael Greene*, vol. ii., p. 233.



General treasured with great pride. Here is Washington's letter to Putnam :

“HEAD-QUARTERS, 2 June, 1783.

“DEAR SIR,—Your favor of the 20th of May I received with much pleasure ; for I can assure you, that, among the many worthy and meritorious officers with whom I have had the happiness to be connected in service through the course of this war, and from whose cheerful assistance and advice I have received much support and confidence, in the various and trying vicissitudes of a complicated contest, the name of a Putnam is not forgotten ; nor will it be but with that stroke of time, which shall obliterate from my mind the remembrance of all those toils and fatigues, through which we have struggled for the preservation and establishment of the rights, liberties, and independence of our country.

“Your congratulations on the happy prospects of peace and independent security, with their attendant blessings to the United States, I receive with great satisfaction ; and beg that you will accept a return of my gratulations to you on this auspicious event ; an event, in which, great as it is in itself, and glorious as it will probably be in its consequences, you have a right to participate largely, from the distinguished part you have contributed towards its attainment.

“But while I contemplate the greatness of the object for which we have contended, and felicitate you on the happy issue of our toils and labors, which have terminated with such general satisfaction, I lament that you should feel the ungrateful returns of a country, in whose service you have exhausted your bodily health, and expended the vigor of a youthful constitution. I wish, however, that your expectations of returning sentiments of liberality may be verified. I have a hope, they may ; but, should they not, your case will not be a singular one. Ingratitude has been experienced in all ages, and republics in particular have ever been famed for the exercise of that unnatural and sordid vice.

“The secretary of war, who is now here, informs me that you have ever been considered as entitled to full pay since your absence from the field : and that you will be still considered

in that light till the close of the war, at which period you will be equally entitled to the same emolument of half-pay or commutation as other officers of your rank. The same opinion is also given by the paymaster-general, who is now with the army, empowered by Mr. Morris for the settlement of all their accounts, and who will attend to yours whenever you shall think proper to send on for the purpose; which it will probably be best for you to do in a short time.

"I anticipate with pleasure the day, and that I trust not far off, when I shall quit the busy scenes of a military employment, and retire to the more tranquil walks of domestic life. In that, or whatever other situation Providence may dispose my future days, the remembrance of the many friendships and connections I have had the happiness to contract with the gentlemen of the army will be one of my most grateful reflections. Under this contemplation, and impressed with the sentiments of benevolence and regard, I commend you, my dear Sir, my other friends, and with them the interests and happiness of our dear country to the keeping and protection of Almighty God.

"I have the honor to be, &c.,

"G. WASHINGTON."

Putnam received frequent visits at his home from old comrades and friends and relatives, and he took keen delight in entertaining them with his reminiscences. "He gave me," says his guest Judge Samuel Putnam,\* "a great many anecdotes of the war in which he had been engaged before the Revolution, tracing the remarkable events upon a map." These "anecdotes" included the hero's experiences as a prisoner in the forest when the Indians, after binding him to a tree to burn him alive, danced and yelled around him. "General Putnam said that their gestures in the dance were so inexpressibly ridiculous that he could not forbear laughing. I expressed some surprise that he could

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\* Letter to Colonel Perley Putnam.

laugh under such circumstances, to which he mildly replied that his composure had no merit, that it was constitutional, and said that he had never felt any bodily fear."

Two stories concerning himself, Putnam was especially fond of telling in his old age, so we learn from family annals. On one occasion, the General, without intending an insult, happened to offend a brother officer by some remark. The latter, who was very hot-tempered, demanded instant reparation; and it was arranged that a duel should take place on the following morning and that they should fight without seconds. At the appointed time the officer appeared, armed with sword and pistols, but before he could take his position, Putnam, who was already on the ground, quickly stepped back a distance of thirty rods, levelled his gun and fired. "What are you doing?" cried the officer, running towards Putnam, who was reloading his weapon for the apparent purpose of firing again. "What am I doing?" replied the General; "a pretty question to ask a man whom you intended to murder! I am going to kill you, and if you don't beat a retreat in less time than it would take old Heath to hang a Tory, you are a gone dog!" While uttering these words, Putnam returned his ramrod to its place, threw the butt of his gun into the hollow of his shoulder, and took aim at his antagonist. The would-be duellist forthwith turned and fled for dear life.

The other favourite story, which Putnam used to enjoy telling, was how he once criticised the British severely in the presence of several persons, among whom was a British officer, a prisoner on his parole, who felt that he was personally insulted, and sent Putnam a challenge to a duel. It was accepted, with the



PUTNAM'S DUEL WITH THE BRITISH OFFICER.





agreement that they should meet the next morning without seconds, and that Putnam himself should provide the weapons. What was the surprise of the Englishman on arriving at the appointed place to find Putnam sitting beside a powder-barrel, calmly smoking a pipe. Bidding the officer take a seat on the other side, Putnam lighted a match, which had been placed in a small opening in the head of the barrel, and in a nonchalant tone remarked that there was an equal chance for them both. The officer in fright sprang to escape from the impending explosion, which followed immediately, when Putnam said : " You are just as brave a man as I thought," and then explained that only a thin layer of powder covered the top of the barrel, which was filled with vegetables.

Putnam retained as a citizen his interest in local affairs, especially when the town of Brooklyn was set off from Pomfret. It was about this time that he strongly opposed the opening of another tavern. He stated his reasons in a letter, which he dictated to a member of his household and sent to the Windham County Court :

" BROOKLYN, Feb. 18, 1782.

"GENTLEMEN,—Being an enemy to Idleness, Dissipation, and Intemperance, I would object against any measures which may be conducive thereto; and the multiplying of public houses, where the public good does not require it, has a direct tendency to ruin the morals of youth, and promote idleness and intemperance among all ranks of people, especially as the grand object of the candidates for licenses is money; and, when that is not the case, men are not over apt to be tender of people's morals or purses. The authorities of this town, I think, have run into a great error in approbating an additional number of public houses, especially in this parish. They have approbated two houses in the centre, where there never was

custom (I mean travelling custom) enough for one. The other custom (the domestic) I have been informed, has, of late years, increased ; and the licensing another house, I fear, would increase it more. As I kept a public house here myself a number of years before the war, I had an opportunity of knowing, and certainly do know, that the travelling custom is too trifling for a man to lay himself out so as to keep such a house as travellers have a right to expect. Therefore, I hope your Honours will consult the good of this parish, so as to license only one of the two houses. I shall not undertake to say which ought to be licensed. Your Honours will act according to your best information.

“ I am, with esteem,

“ Your Honour's humble servant,

“ ISRAEL PUTNAM.

“ To the Honourable County Court, to be holden at Windham on the 19th instant.”

In an address, delivered at Putnam, Connecticut, on October 25, 1855, at a meeting of the descendants of the General, his great-grandson, Rev. L. Grosvenor, said :

“ He [General Putnam] is described by those now living, who frequently saw him in his old age, as being very large around the chest, showing what we would expect from his habits, a great amount of the sanguine, vital temperament. Even after his final return from the wars, when one side of him was so paralysed that his right arm clung close and useless to his side, and he had to be assisted to mount his horse, he rode almost every day on horseback, ‘sitting up as straight as a boy.’ ”

Putnam regained his strength to such a degree that he was able, as late as in 1786, to make a journey to his birthplace in Massachusetts. He was accompanied thither by his coloured man, Dick. Says Judge Samuel Putnam, in his reminiscences of the General :

"He rode on horseback from Brooklyn to Danvers and paid his last visit to his friends there. On his way home he stopped at Cambridge at the College, where the governor of the College paid him much attention. It was in my junior year; he came into my room. His speech was much affected by palsy."

It was soon after Putnam's return from his visit to Massachusetts that his son Israel joined the Ohio Company, which had been organised by General Rufus Putnam and others, and removed with his family to the West. At this time, Daniel, who had married Catharine Hutchinson in 1782, was living on a farm of his own which had once belonged to Godfrey Malbone's estate. The General's youngest son, Peter Schuyler Putnam, who had recently brought his bride, Lucy Frink, to the Putnam homestead, assumed full charge of the old farm. Here the veteran continued to spend his last days, in the house which he himself had built in the early period of his life in Connecticut, and which since then had been considerably enlarged.

This pleasant glimpse of Putnam is given by his great-grandson, the minister Grosvenor, in the address of 1855 :

"Many anecdotes are related of his energy and perseverance in the days of his bodily feebleness. Those who are old now, but boys then, remember, and tell with delight, about the General's spirited bay mare, and the perfect mastery which he maintained over her, bringing her at any time to a dead halt, by shaking the head of his ivory-headed cane. He was frequently seen at the houses of his sons and daughters in Brooklyn and Pomfret, and at the raisings and other gatherings and merrymakings in the neighbourhood. There, seated in some arm-chair, promptly brought forward by the young men for his comfort, he leaning like another old patriarch on the top of his staff, surrounded by a crowd of children and grandchildren, and friends and neighbours, related abundant

anecdotes of the olden time, while his happy audience greeted with loud laughter the outflowings of his ready wit and his kindly and genial humour."

On Sundays Putnam was not prevented by his physical infirmity from attending the services at the Congregational meeting-house. He even ventured out in the evening to the prayer-meetings, and would add his religious testimony to that of others. There is a story that once a brother Christian made some pointed remarks, expressing doubt as to the possibility of effectual grace being granted to a person who had ever been addicted to profanity. The General forthwith arose and confessed the failing which he had finally overcome, but he added, with a twinkle in his eye, "It was enough to make an angel swear at Bunker Hill to see the rascals run away from the British!"

In the autumn of 1787, Putnam received a welcome visit from Humphreys, who had recently returned from Europe, where he had been on diplomatic service. Putnam, so his friend found, "retained unimpaired his relish for enjoyment, his love of pleasantry, his strength of memory, and all the faculties of his mind." He was easily induced to repeat the principal incidents of his eventful life, while his visitor undertook the pleasing task of committing them to paper as material for the proposed biography. It was at Mt. Vernon, the home of Washington, that Humphreys wrote the *Essay on the Life of the Honourable Major-General Putnam* for the Connecticut State Society of Cincinnati, which was published in 1788, while the hero was still living.

"It occurred to me," says Humphreys in this book, "that an attempt to preserve the actions of General Putnam, in the



archives of our State Society, would be acceptable to its members, as they had all served with great satisfaction under his immediate orders. General Putnam is universally acknowledged to have been as brave and as honest a man as ever America produced, but the distinguishing features of his character, and the particular transactions of his life are but imperfectly known. He seems to have been formed on purpose for the age in which he lived. His native courage, unshaken integrity, and established reputation as a soldier, were necessary in the early stages of our opposition to the designs of Great Britain and gave unbounded confidence to our troops in their first conflicts in the field of battle. . . . In patient yet fearless expectation of the approach of the King of Terrors, whom he hath full often faced in the field of blood, the Christian hero now enjoys in domestic retirement the fruit of his early industry."

On Thursday, May 27, 1790, Putnam was violently attacked by an inflammatory disease. He rapidly failed, and it was soon evident that his end was near. His mind was clear to the last. He passed away, "calm and resigned," on Saturday, May 29th. The funeral was on Tuesday, June 1st. The *Independence Chronicle and Universal Advertiser* of June 10, 1790, contained the following account of the burial service :

"BROOKLYN, CONN., June 3, 1790.—Saturday last died here, after a short illness, in the 73d year of his age, that celebrated hero, patriot, and philanthropist, Israel Putnam, Esq., Major-General in the late Continental Army. He enjoyed his reason to the last moments of his life, and with remarkable cheerfulness and solid satisfaction, left this for the everlasting rewards of a better and more glorious country, and on Tuesday his funeral was attended by the largest and most respectable collection of the inhabitants ever known here on a like occasion. After a well adapted sermon was delivered by Rev. Josiah Whitney, the procession moved to the burying ground in the following order :



Company of Grenadiers,  
Militia of the Town, with reversed arms,  
Music,  
Company of Artillery,  
Free Masons in the badges of their order,  
Bearers—The Corpse—Bearers,  
Mourners,  
The Clergy,  
The Church of Brooklyn,  
Military Officers,  
Inhabitants.

“When the procession had arrived at the burying ground, the troops opening to the right and left, the Masons passed on to the grave, and after performing their accustomed ancient ceremonies and pronouncing a short eulogium on the character of the deceased, the Grenadiers advanced and three platoons fired, which was succeeded by a discharge from the artillery. The whole was concluded with that order and decorum which the love and respect of the inhabitants inspired.”

The funeral sermon by the Rev. Dr. Whitney was soon afterwards printed in pamphlet form. In closing this discourse, on the text from Ecclesiastes vii., 2, “That is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart,”—Putnam’s old pastor and friend spoke with feeling of the hero’s character. He said of the General :

“He was eminently a person of a public spirit—an unshaken friend to liberty ; and was proof against attempts to induce him to betray and desert his country ; the baits to do so were rejected with the utmost abhorrence. He was of a kind, benevolent disposition—pitiful to the distressed—charitable to the needy—ready to assist all who wanted his help. In his family—he was the tender, affectionate husband—the provident father—an example of industry and close application to business. He was a constant attendant upon the public worship of God, from his youth up. He brought his family with him, when he came to worship the Lord. He was not ashamed of family religion—his house was a house of prayer. For many years he was a professor of religion. In the last years of his life he



HOUSE IN BROOKLYN, CONN., WHERE GENERAL ISRAEL PUTNAM DIED.



often expressed a great regard for God and the things of God. There is one at least to whom he freely disclosed the workings of his mind—his conviction of sin—grief for it—dependence on God through the Redeemer, for pardon—and hope of a happy future existence whenever his heart and strength should fail him. This one makes mention hereof for the satisfaction and comfort of his children and friends ; and can add, that being with the General a little before he died, asked him whether his hope of future happiness (as formerly expressed) now attended him ? His answer was in the affirmative, with a declaration of his resignation to the will of God and willingness even then to die.”

The eulogium pronounced at the grave of Putnam by Dr. Albigece Waldo, and published in the *Independence Chronicle* of June 24, 1790, and in Thomas’s *Massachusetts Spy*, was as follows :

“Those venerable relics ! once delighted in the endearing domestic virtues, which constitute the excellent neighbour—husband—parent—and worthy brother ! liberal and substantial in his friendship ;—unsuspicious—open—and generous ;—just and sincere in dealing ;—a benevolent citizen of the world—He concentrated in his bosom the noble qualities of an Honest Man.

“Born a hero,—whom nature taught and cherished in the lap of innumerable toils and dangers, he was terrible in battle ! But, from the amiableness of his heart—when carnage ceased, his humanity spread over the field, like the refreshing zephyrs of a summer’s evening !—The prisoner—the wounded—the sick—the forlorn—experienced the delicate sympathy of this Soldier’s Pillar—The poor, and the needy, of every description, received the charitable bounties of this Christian Soldier.

“He pitied littleness—loved goodness—admired greatness, and ever aspired to its glorious summit ! The friend, the servant, and almost unparalleled lover of his country ;—worn with honourable age and the former toils of war—Putnam ! ‘Rests from his labours.’

“Till mouldering worlds and tumbling systems burst !  
When the last trump shall renovate his dust—  
Still by the mandate of eternal truth,  
His soul will ‘flourish in immortal youth.’

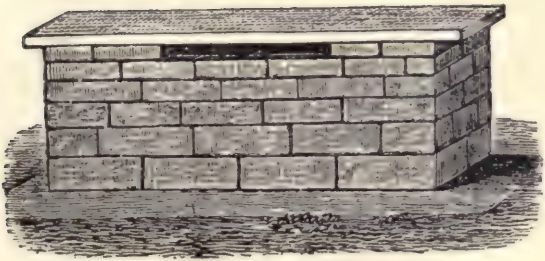
“This all who knew him know ;—this all who lov’d him, tell.”

The General was buried in the Brooklyn cemetery. A tomb two or three feet high was built of brick, and across the top was placed a marble slab with this epitaph by the Rev. Timothy Dwight, who, five years later, became the President of Yale College, and who had been intimately acquainted with the hero in private and public life :

To the memory  
Of  
Israel Putnam, Esquire,  
Senior Major General in the Armies  
Of  
The United States of America  
Who  
Was born at Salem  
In the Province of Massachusetts  
On the seventh day of January  
A.D. 1718 :  
And died  
On the twenty ninth day of May  
A.D. 1790 :

Passenger  
If thou art a Soldier  
Drop a Tear over the dust of a Hero  
Who  
Ever attentive  
To the lives and happiness of his Men  
Dared to lead  
Where any Dared to follow ;  
If a Patriot  
Remember the distinguished and gallant services  
Rendered thy Country  
By the Patriot who sleeps beneath this Monument ;  
If thou art Honest, generous & worthy  
Render a cheerful tribute of respect  
To a Man  
Whose generosity was singular  
Whose honesty was proverbial  
Who  
Raised himself to universal esteem  
And offices of Eminent distinction  
By personal worth  
And a  
Useful life.





GENERAL PUTNAM'S MONUMENT.



By his will, which was dated February 25, 1782, Putnam left about a thousand acres of land, in Pomfret, Brooklyn, and Canterbury, divided between his sons, Israel, Daniel, and Peter Schuyler, and twelve hundred pounds in money, divided equally among his four daughters; he bequeathed also to his grandson, Elisha Avery, one hundred and fifty pounds in money; and also to his son, Peter Schuyler, all his live stock, farming tools, and provisions.

Putnam's short battle sword, with scabbard, was bequeathed by his grandson, Lemuel Putnam Grosvenor, who inherited it, to the Connecticut Historical Society. It was formally delivered to the Society in 1859, on the one hundred and forty-first anniversary of the General's birth. Another sword which once belonged to Putnam is now owned by the Bunker Hill Monument Association, and is kept on exhibition in the Lodge at the foot of the monument in Charlestown, Massachusetts. Among the relics of Putnam which are owned to-day by individuals are his plough and saddle, in the possession of A. E. Brooks, of Hartford, Connecticut, who believes them to be genuine. In addition to their associations, they are of special interest as types of what was used in the old hero's days.

There are two noteworthy statues to the memory of Putnam, both of them in Connecticut. One of them is in Bushnell Park, at Hartford, in front of the State Capitol, and was erected from a legacy left by Joseph Pratt Allyn of that city. This statue, which represents the General in the military costume of his day, was designed by J. Q. A. Ward, and was unveiled on June 17, 1874, with appropriate exercises. The other statue of Putnam—an equestrian statue—is at Brooklyn, and was placed there by the State. By the wear of almost

a century, the old tomb became dilapidated, and the marble slab across the top was mutilated by relic hunters. The condition of the monument was so wholly unworthy of the illustrious dead, that the General Assembly of Connecticut in 1886 appointed commissioners to erect a suitable monument by the State. The design of Karl Gerhardt was chosen, representing the General on his war-horse. The plot of ground on which this equestrian statue stands is situated near the Brooklyn public square, and is on the north-east corner of the historic Mortlake property. To the north is the old meeting-house where Putnam rang the bell and attended service ; to the north-east is the site of his inn ; and to the east is the field where the old hero left his plough and the quiet pursuits of husbandry for the cause of liberty and the field of battle.

The dust of Putnam was removed from the cemetery, where he was originally buried, and placed in a sarcophagus which was built into the foundation of the monument. The statue is of bronze. At each end of the stone pedestal there is an ornamented wolf's head in bronze. The tablets bear the original epitaph by President Dwight.\* This monument was dedicated, June 14, 1888, with exercises of great interest.

The facts of Israel Putnam's life plainly show that

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\* The old slab which covered the original tomb of Putnam is now kept in the lower corridor of the Capitol at Hartford. Since its removal from Brooklyn the inscription upon it has called attention to a curious error which has been generally made in regard to the exact day of the month of his death. It is given as May 19, 1790, in the biographies of Putnam by Humphreys, Cutter, Peabody, Hill, and Tarbox, and also in *The Century Cyclopædia of Names*, *Appleton's* and *Johnson's Cyclopædias*, and other well-known books. The date on the

To the me  
Of  
Israel Putnam  
Senior Major General in  
Of  
The United States of Am.  
Who  
Was born at Salem  
In the Province of Massachusetts  
On the seventh day of January  
D. 1718  
And died  
On the twentieth day of May  
D. 1796

Challenger.

If thou art a Soldier  
Drop a Tear over the dust of a Hero.

Who,

Ever attentive

To the lives and happiness of his Men.

Dared to lead

Where any Dared to follow

If a Patriot.

Remember the distinguished and gallant service

Rendered thy Country.

By the Patriot who sleeps beneath this Monument.

If thou art Honest, generous, & worthy

Render a heartfull tribute of respect

To a Man.

Whose generosity was singular

Whose honesty was proverbial

Who

Raised him self to universal este

And offices of Eminent distin

By personal worth

And a

Usefull

SLAB TAKEN FROM ISRAEL PUTNAM'S GRAVE IN BROOKLYN, CONN.  
NOW KEPT IN STATE HOUSE, HARTFORD, CONN.





the qualities of character which distinguished him and gave him an honoured place among the makers of American history were positiveness and friendliness and hopefulness. He was more than the bold ranger or the undaunted fighter. He was, as was said at his funeral, the true man.

His positiveness was of that kind which creates enthusiasm. It was inspiring to be in the presence of one who had never known fear whatsoever. The thrilling exploits, from the wolf-hunt at Pomfret to the ride down the rocky height at Horseneck, were not mere adventures prompted by the chance of circumstances. They were evidences of a force of character which manifested itself in manifold ways. The years in the French and Indian War were characterised, not only by the bold deeds of the faithful ranger in constantly reconnoitring the enemy's camp, or in pursuing plunderers, or in guarding the army against sudden attack, but also by that eagerness for the rescue of others from danger, which impelled him, single-handed, at the risk of his life, to save a comrade from the fury of a savage, or to steer companions skilfully through dangerous rapids away from the foe, or to hasten with his little band of men to the protection of soldiers who were under an unexpected assault by the enemy, and

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slab, however, is lettered "the twenty-ninth day of May," and is the same as that mentioned in the pamphlet which contains the funeral sermon by Rev. Josiah Whitney. The error afterwards made is doubtless owing to the fact that Humphreys, whose book was published for the first time while Putnam was living, died before the new edition appeared in 1818, and the person, unknown to us to-day, who added the account of the General's death and burial, used numerals in copying the date from the old tomb and wrote by mistake 19th instead of 29th.

who had been abandoned to their fate. This was more than simple daring on Putnam's part. It was energy and efficiency as the result of self-forgetfulness. In the national struggle for independence the same quality of character found expression in him. When others faltered, he remained strong-hearted. When others would question or debate the expediency of an undertaking, he was eager for action. He would draw the British wolf out of the den, not delay nor dally! His instant response from the plough to the call to service, the ride to Boston, the marshalling of men, the advance to the gates of the enemy's stronghold for siege and conflict, and the memorable encounter at Bunker Hill, —who does not recognise in these events of Putnam's life a forceful purpose which made him the practical commander-in-chief of patriots? Whatever may be thought, from a strictly military point of view, of his capacity for handling large bodies of troops, it is certain that he was of invaluable service, in the struggle for liberty, in arousing men to courage and patriotism by his own positive nature.

Another quality of Putnam's character was his friendliness. Jealousy could find no place in his heart. The generosity of his whole nature cherished every friendship. Those with whom he had once shared, in the colonial wars, common privations and dangers on land and water, and by fire and sword, were still his personal friends in the American Revolution, though they might be fighting on the side of the King. The affectionate attachment to former comrades, which found expression during the suspension of military formalities of hostile camps, meant no less love on his part for the cause in which he was serving. The tender incidents which we find also in the story of his life—his



STATUE OF GENERAL ISRAEL PUTNAM, AT BROOKLYN, CONN.





compassion for the sorrowing, his care for the suffering, his chivalry to women, his kindness to children, his thoughtfulness for the weak—are evidences of the same generous nature. In the dear and close relation of the home life, he was the devoted husband and the affectionate father.

Hopefulness was the third trait. Putnam knew by remarkable experience the vicissitudes of life, but hardships could not cast him down, nor disappointments embitter his nature. The unusual demands on the ranger—the long forest marches, the continual vigilance against lurking danger, the exhausting and often fruitless ventures—these, although they might make large draughts upon his strength, could not drain his exuberant spirits. When he became the victim of savages and suffered torture and beheld death face to face, the vitality of his nature would not admit defeat. And there were other demands on his abounding life. He knew what it was to have his motives misjudged, his cherished plans set aside, his limitations criticised and even derided, but resentment did not rankle in his soul. When he met with defeat, he rose above it, not because he was insensible to chagrin but because he had confidence in what he might still accomplish, and his sanguine nature pictured victory before him. Although increasing age might despoil his power of endurance, it could not quench his ardour, nor make him less a man. When infirmity summoned him to quiet life, keen as was his disappointment to leave the scenes of camp and battle, he was still the soldier—intrepid, hopeful, brave to the end.

This indomitable hero, of generous soul and sterling patriotism, will always hold high place among American men of energy.





## APPENDIX I

### PORTRAITS OF ISRAEL PUTNAM

The principal portraits of Putnam are these :

1. A mezzotint engraving, folio size, issued by a London publisher in 1775, which represents the General in uniform, standing, and looking toward the right, his right elbow resting on the muzzle of a cannon, his left hand on his waist, and in the background a battery of cannon firing. This engraving has the full title :

“ Israel Putnam, Esq., Major General of the Connecticut Forces and Commander in Chief at the Engagement on Bunker’s Hill, near Boston, 17th June, 1775.

J. Wilkinson, Pinx.

London, published as the Act directs, 9th September, 1775, by C. Shepherd, London.”

This portrait has been reproduced in J. C. Smith’s *British Mezzotint Portraits*, p. 1716. It has been copied in America, England, Germany, and France.

2. A quaint picture of Putnam on a white horse in an American engraving by B. Romanes, entitled, “An exact view of the late battle at Charlestown, June 17, 1775.” It was published, in 1775, on a sheet twenty inches by twelve in size. It appeared, in a reduced form, in the *Pennsylvania Magazine* of Philadelphia, in 1775, and was reproduced in 1875 in Frothingham’s Centennial edition of *The Battle of Bunker Hill*, and in the newspapers at the time of the Bunker Hill Centennial Celebration.

3. An engraving in Murray’s *Impartial History of the War in America*, published at Newcastle upon Tyne, England, in 1780. This portrait of Putnam was “drawn from life,” but is

really an effort of the artist's imagination. This may be also said of another picture, a full-length figure, representing Putnam, which was engraved by Roberts, London, for Bernard's *History of England*.

4. A pencil sketch of Putnam from life, by Col. John Trumbull, which was inherited by the late Professor Benjamin Silliman, of Yale University, and which is now owned by the Putnam Phalanx, of Hartford, Conn. This is the most accurate likeness of the General, and was used by Trumbull in representing Putnam in the well-known painting, "The Battle of Bunker Hill." In that picture Putnam is seen on the left in the rear, waving his sword. Trumbull's portrait of Putnam has been engraved by Hall, Gimbrede, Perine, Burt, and others; notably by W. Humphreys for the *National Portrait Gallery of Distinguished Americans*. A painting of Putnam by H. I. Thompson, after the pencil sketch by Trumbull, is in the State Capitol at Hartford, Conn. A painting by Alonzo Chappel, which represents Putnam on horseback, was engraved for the *National Portrait Gallery of Eminent Americans*.





## APPENDIX II

### THE COMMAND IN THE BATTLE OF BUNKER HILL

The following bibliography relating to the command in the Battle of Bunker Hill, was prepared by the late Justin Winsor for the *Narrative and Critical History of America*, vol. vi., pp. 190-191 :

"The question of who commanded during the day has been the subject of continued controversy, arising from the too large claims of partisans. . . The discussion of the claims of Putnam and Prescott has resulted in a large number of monographs, and has formed a particular feature in many of the general accounts of the battle. . .

"The earliest general narrative to give the command to Prescott was Gordon's, which followed closely the account of the Committee of Safety, and this was printed in 1788. The *Life of Putnam*, by Humphreys, was published in 1788, while Putnam was still living, and makes no mention of his having the command ; but the Rev. Josiah Whitney, in 1790, in a note to a sermon preached upon the death of Putnam, took exception to this oversight (Stevens's *Hist. Coll.*, i., no. 685). In 1809, Eliot, in his *Biographical Dictionary*, represents Prescott as commanding at the redoubt and Stark at the rail fence. When General Wilkinson's *Memoirs* were published, in 1816 (reviewed in the *North Amer. Rev.*, Nov., 1817), the conduct of Putnam on that day was represented in no favourable light ; and General Henry Dearborn, who was with Stark at the rail fence, asserted that Putnam remained inactive in the rear. It is also significant that Major Thompson Maxwell, who was with Reed's regiment at the rail fence, also asserted that Prescott commanded (*Essex Inst. Hist. Coll.*, vol. vii.; *N. E. Hist.*



and *Geneal. Reg.*, Jan., 1868, p. 57). Dearborn's statement was made in a paper in the *Portfolio* (March, 1818), which is reprinted in the *Hist. Mag.*, August, 1864, and June, 1868 (Dawson, p. 402). It was printed also separately at the time in Philadelphia and Boston (1818), as *An Account of the Battle of Bunker Hill with De Bernière's map corrected by General Dearborn* (16 pp.). Colonel Daniel Putnam replied in the *Portfolio* (May, 1818), with numerous depositions (all reprinted by Dawson, p. 407), which was issued separately as *A letter to Maj.-Gen. Dearborn, repelling his unprovoked attack on the character of the late Maj.-General Putnam, and containing some anecdotes relating to the Battle of Bunker Hill, not generally known* (Philadelphia, 1818.) Both tracts were reprinted as an *Account of the Battle of Bunker's Hill, by H. Dearborn, Major-General of the United States Army; with a letter to Major-General Dearborn, repelling his unprovoked attack on the character of the late Maj.-Gen. Israel Putnam by Daniel Putnam, Esq.* (Boston : Munroe & Francis, 1818). Each document is paged separately, and the last has a separate title. Dearborn replied in the *Boston Patriot* (June 13, 1818), with depositions, all of which are in Dawson, p. 414. See account of General Dearborn, by Daniel Goodwin, Jr., in the *Chicago Hist. Soc. Proc.* In July, 1818, Daniel Webster, in the *North Amer. Rev.*, vindicated Putnam, but claimed for Prescott as much of a general command during the day as any one had, which claim he held to be established by Prescott's making his report to Ward at Cambridge when it was over. (Cf. *Mass. Hist. Soc. Proc.*, June, 1858). John Lowell offered counter-depositions in the *Columbian Centinel* (July 4 and 15, 1818), again reprinted in Dawson, p. 423. In October, 1818, Col. Samuel Swett appended an *Historical and Topographical Sketch of Bunker Hill Battle* to a new edition of Humphreys's *Life of Putnam*. In the *Boston Patriot*, Nov. 17, 1818, D. L. Child claimed that Putnam was not in the battle, and he published separately *An Enquiry into the Conduct of Gen. Putnam* (Boston, 1819). In 1825, Swett enlarged his text and published it as a *History of the Battle of Bunker Hill* (Boston, 1825), followed by *Notes to his Sketch* in Dec., 1825. His history passed to a second edition as a *History of the Bunker*

*Hill Battle, with a plan. By S. Swett. Second Edition, much enlarged with new information derived from the surviving soldiers present at the celebration on the 17th June last, and notes* (Boston, 1826). A third appeared in 1827. (Cf. Sparks in *North Amer. Rev.*, vol. xxii.) A new advocate for Putnam appeared in Alden Bradford's *Particular Account of the Battle of Bunker or Breed's Hill*, by a *Citizen of Boston* (two editions, Boston, 1825, and since reprinted); while Daniel Putnam during the same year recapitulated his views in a communication to the Bunker Hill Monument Association (*Conn. Hist. Soc. Coll.*, vol. i.). A summary of this Putnam-Dearborn controversy is given in G. W. Warren's *History of the Bunker Hill Monument Association*.

"The dispute now remained dormant until 1831, when George E. Ellis delivered an oration at Charlestown, and then, and in his *Sketches of Bunker Hill Battle, with illustrative documents* (Charlestown, 1843), he presented at fuller length than had been before done the claims of Prescott to be considered the commander. This led to a criticism and rejoinder by Swett and Ellis in the *Boston Daily Advertiser*. See Judge Prescott's letter to Dr. Ellis in *Mass. Hist. Soc. Proc.* (iv., 76), and another to Col. Swett (xiv., 78. Cf. Memoir of Swett and a list of his publications in the *N. E. Hist. and Geneal. Reg.*, 1867, p. 374). In 1843, John Fellows, in *The Veil Removed; or, Reflections on David Humphreys's Essay on the Life of Israel Putnam; also notices of Oliver W. B. Peabody's Life of the same; S. Swett's Sketch of Bunker Hill*, etc. (New York, 1843), ranged himself among the detractors of Putnam.

"In 1849, the question was again elaborately examined in Frothingham's *Siege of Boston* (p. 159, etc.), favouring Prescott, which produced Swett's *Who was the Commander at Bunker Hill?* (Boston, 1850), and Frothingham's rejoinder, *The Command in the Battle of Bunker Hill* (Boston, 1850). Cf. also the *Report to the Massachusetts Legislature on a monument to Col. Prescott* (1852). In 1853, Irving favoured Prescott (*Washington*, vol. i.). In 1855, L. Grosvenor, in an address before the descendants of Putnam, reiterated that general's claims. In 1857, Barry (*Hist. of Mass.*, vol. iii., 39), gave to Prescott the command in the redoubt, and to Putnam a general direction

outside the redoubt. In 1858, Bancroft in his *History* (vol. vii.) took the view substantially that Prescott commanded at the redoubt and sent out the party which in the beginning protected his flank towards the Mystic, but when Stark, with his New Hampshire men, came up to strengthen that party, his authority was generally recognised and he held the rail fence there as long as he could to cover the retreat of Prescott's men from the redoubt; that Putnam, the ranking officer on the field, Warren having disclaimed all right to command, withdrew men with intrenching tools from Prescott, and planned to throw up earthworks on the higher eminence, now known as Bunker Hill proper, and near the end of the retreat he assumed a general command, and directed the fortifying of Prospect Hill. In 1859, A. C. Griswold, as "Selah," of the *Hartford Post*, had a controversy with H. B. Dawson, who exceeded others in his denunciation of Putnam, and this correspondence was printed as Parts 6 and 11 of Dawson's *Gleanings from the Harvest-field of American History* (Morrisania, 1860-63), with the distinctive title *Major-General Putnam*. In 1860, the Hon. H. C. Deming published an address on the occasion of the presentation of Putnam's sword to the Connecticut Historical Society.

"The question of the command was again discussed at the season of the Centennial of 1875. The chief papers in favour of Putnam were by I. N. Tarbox in the *New York Herald* (June 12 and 14), in the *New Englander* (April, 1876), and in his *Life of Putnam*; by S. A. Drake in his *General Israel Putnam, the Commander at Bunker Hill*; by W. W. Wheildon in his letters to the *New York Herald* (June 16 and 17), and in his *New History of the Battle of Bunker Hill*. General Charles Devens's oration in *The Celebration of the Centennial Anniversary of the Battle of Bunker Hill* (Boston, 1875), did not extend Prescott's command beyond the redoubt as was done, however, in Francis J. Parker's *Colonel Wm. Prescott, the Commander in the Battle of Bunker's Hill* (Boston, 1875), and his paper, "Could General Putnam Command at Bunker's Hill?" in *N. E. Hist. and Geneal. Reg.* (Oct., 1877, p. 403). During the same year, Dr. George E. Ellis recast the material of his earlier book, in his *History of the Battle of Bunker's*

[*Breed's*] *Hill* (Boston, 1875, in 16mo. and 8vo., the latter revised). The Centennial period produced also various magazine articles, the most important of which are one by H. E. Scudder in the *Atlantic Monthly*, July, 1875; one by Launce Poyntz, in the *Galaxy*, July, 1875; one by Dr. Samuel Osgood in *Harper's Monthly*, July, 1875; and those which later constituted a brochure, *One Hundred Years Ago*, by Edward E. Hale."









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